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SERMONS

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BY

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CHAPLAIN OF LINCOLN'S INN.

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November 29, 1857.

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"ARISE, O GOD, AND JUDGE THOU THE EARTH: FOR THOU SHALT TAKE ALL HEATHEN TO THINE INHERITANCE."

IN the Collect for this day we give thanks that Christ has come in great humility; we pray for grace that we may be prepared to meet Him when He comes in glorious majesty to judge the quick and the dead. One of these Advents we are wont to represent as full of blessings, the other as full of terror. We bid men hope, because Christ was born of the Virgin and died on Calvary; we bid them tremble, because He will be revealed sitting on the throne of His glory, with all nations gathered before Him.

It was not thus that the Psalmists and Prophets of old spoke. They desired, earnestly desired, that God would arise to judge the earth. They desired it, not for their own sakes, because they counted upon some exemption from the tribulations that were awaiting others; but for the earth's sake. They looked for this judgment as its deliverance from its miseries

and its bondage. They desired this judgment, not chiefly because they thought that it would bring victory and blessing to Israel, though they had that expectation; they believed that God would then take the heathen to *His* inheritance, that this judgment would be the full establishment of *His* kingdom.

These differences are great and startling; there is another which causes scarcely less wonder to those who reflect upon it. We are wont to divide the Advent of Mercy from the Advent for Judgment by an immense tract of ages. There has been, we say, a long day of Grace since Christ was revealed as the Saviour in Palestine; when that day ends, then He will be revealed as taking Vengeance upon those who have rejected Him there and everywhere. On the other hand, when we read the Prophets, we are perplexed by finding these Advents brought together as if they were parts of the same transaction, as if one could scarcely be separated from the other. The instances are so numerous, that to gather them together would be to go over the whole field of Jewish Prophecy. I will mention two, because they both occur in him who is emphatically the Advent Prophet, and because they are both quoted in the Gospels. The first is in the opening of the 42nd chapter of Isaiah. It is adduced by St. Matthew in his 12th chapter, when he is recording some of Our Lord's acts of healing. "*When Jesus knew it*" (that the Pharisees were holding a council against Him), "*He withdrew Himself from thence:*

and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all; and charged them that they should not make Him known: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Esaias the Prophet, saying, Behold my Servant, Whom I have chosen; my Beloved, in Whom my soul is well pleased. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory. And in His Name shall the Gentiles trust." This passage, and the use of it, are surely remarkable. The signs of a King coming in great humility are brought together by the Prophet. The Evangelist feels that Our Lord's command, that the sick whom He had cured should not make Him known,—when the natural desire of a great Teacher would be to make known the acts which were the witnesses of His power,—is the fulfilment of the description which had been given by the old seer. And yet one part of that description, which St. Matthew will not sever from the rest—he could not sever it without destroying the sense—is this, "He shall send forth judgment unto victory."

The other illustration of what I have said is in the opening of the 61st chapter of Isaiah. There you find the words which Our Lord, as St. Luke tells us, read in the synagogue of Nazareth when he had returned, after his temptation, to Galilee. "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath*

anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year" (the Jubilee) *"of the Lord."* What could be a more full account of a deliverer? As such Jesus accepts it. *"This day,"* He says to the people of His own city, *"is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."* But those who heard Him knew what followed. "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and *the day of vengeance of our God."* They knew, also, that these words are interposed between those which they had heard from Christ's lips and others equally consolatory. *"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."*

If these were exceptional sentences, the force of which was doubtful, we might perhaps find some way of escaping from the difficulty. But they are type sentences,—helps to the understanding of others,—evidently fixed upon in the New Testament for that reason. In fact, this apparent union of opposite subjects, of times far separated, is not less characteristic of Evangelists and of Apostles than of the elder men. Very seldom indeed do they speak of Christ as having come, without bidding His followers look for Him and wait for him as about to come. *"Yet a very little while,"* says the writer of the

Epistle to the Hebrews, (ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον,) "*and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*" That Epistle was written for a most practical purpose; to warn men who thought that Christ might have come to save their institutions, that these must give place to something more comprehensive and satisfactory. It was no time for playing with words in a double sense. The Christians of Palestine were to be prepared for an actual crisis that was at hand. And this was the language which an inspired Teacher chose as most suitable for that preparation. How is this habit of speech to be accounted for? What made it so natural to the Apostles? With what notions of ours does it jar? I think a little consideration may tell us.

I. The Church does not distinguish the Advent of Our Lord from His Incarnation. She regards His coming upon this earth as His coming into our nature. This is the explanation of the Collect. Christ comes in great humility; that is to say, He stoops into a condition which was not His own proper, original condition. As St. Paul expresses it: "*He being in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant.*" Another thought was combined in the minds of the Apostles with this; without which it is imperfect. They believed that man was made in the image of God; they believed that He Who is the perfect Image of God must set forth—can alone set forth—true and perfect manhood. They believed that

the Holy God *could* not, according to the fictions of Hindooism, become incarnate in a mere animal; that for the Son to become a Man, was to fulfil His Own purpose in creating the world. But the condescension to the conditions of fallen man was in no wise lessened by the belief that men were chosen by Christ to be God's children. The Epistle to the Hebrews reconciles the two ideas. "*Forasmuch,*" it says, "*as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.*" Flesh and blood—the incidents of mortality—did not belong to Him: He assumed them: He came to show forth in them the perfect Mind of God, the perfect Mind of Man, His child and servant.

What follows? This Advent of Christ was the Advent of the true King, and Head, and *Judge* of Men; it could be nothing else if it was the Advent of the Son of God, of Him after whose likeness men were created. And those to whom He came, and who did not receive Him, felt that it was so. They felt themselves confronted by a terrible heart-searcher; by One Who saw what was in them; by One Who could and Who did bring what was in them to light. He was like them, He spoke to them, reasoned with them, ate and drank with them. He did not the less make them tremble. He did not the less give them a sense of God being near to them. You say He was meek and gentle; a bruised reed did He not break, smoking flax did He not quench. Even

so. And is there nothing terrible to me in a meekness and gentleness which sets my want of meekness and gentleness in full relief? If I *do* break the bruised reed, if I *do* quench the smoking flax, is not One Who never does, an awful object to me? Am I intended to be like Him? What does His coming in my nature mean, if I am not? But if I am to be like Him, He is judging me for not being like Him.

That was the natural feeling of Scribes and Pharisees; that was the secret of their hatred. But did He not say, "*I am not come to judge the world, but to save it*"? Certainly He said so, and He proved His words to be true. He passed sentence on no man, no Scribe, Pharisee, Publican, Adulteress. He came to unite all to Himself; to reveal Himself as the Light of the World; to say to every one, "Follow me, and thou shalt not walk in darkness." This was the *promise* of Salvation to every man who desired to be a man. He could be raised out of a selfish life; he could enter upon a true human life. This was the *promise* of a Salvation for *mankind*. The Head of the race was come; the members of the race were not intended any longer to be atoms warring against each other. The Seed of Abraham, the Son of David, was proving the sacredness of every Greek and Barbarian, every freeman and every bondsman. But if it was a promise, it must be fulfilled. Christ appearing in great humility, neither completed the Salvation nor the Judgment. His Resurrection and Ascension were

to carry on what the Incarnation had begun. The message of full Redemption, of an Advent to Judgment, must rest upon them.

II. We find that it did. Christ, said the Apostles, has died for our sins; has risen again for our justification. This was the message which St. Peter bore to his own countrymen. "*God*," he said, "*having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*" The gift of the Spirit was a witness that He was exalted "*by the right hand of God, to be both Lord and Christ.*" But that same Spirit was to prepare them for a great and terrible day of the Lord. So spake the Apostle of the Circumcision. He was taught, though that was his calling, that the nature of his message forbade the limitation of it. That which concerned the union of God with man was false, if it was not universal. God was judging the earth, and claiming the heathen for His inheritance.

St. Paul had a deeper and clearer insight into this truth. *He* was *the* witness of a Justification for every man, of a Justification for mankind. Christ was sent for the remission of sins that were past to Gentiles as well as Jews. The Gentiles were *fellow-heirs, members of the body of Christ.* And *therefore* St. Paul was the great preacher of Judgment. The revelation of God's righteousness for the justification of men was, he said, itself the "*revelation of* God's *wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold*

down the truth in unrighteousness." The Jewish hypocrites had not been mistaken. One had come Who was without guile, and Who therefore condemned their guile. One had come Who could raise them out of their guile; Who could give them a clean, honest heart; therefore He had pronounced those who continued shut up in their falsehood, accursed. And this truth, so preached to men, so, in an imperfect degree, brought home to their consciences by Him Who was appearing in great humility, must assuredly be brought home in its full power to them by Him Who was clothed in the glory of His Father. He had left the visible world, He had gone up on high,—so the Apostles said,—not because He was separated from men, but to assert His kingdom over them all, to claim for each his proper life, his true inheritance as a child of God. The Father had exalted Him, and in Him had exalted the race with which He had identified Himself. The desire of men for immortality, for fellowship with God; this desire, which had taken strange forms, which had led to monstrous experiments, but which had never been extinguished in any nation or in any man; which had been strongest in the noblest nations, in the wisest men,—distorted, held down, turned to evil in both by pride, ambition, tyranny; this desire, when it seemed most exhausted, most hopeless, Christ had vindicated and accomplished, not for the elect nation, but for all the nations; not for sages and saints, but for serfs and outcasts.

And therefore the judgment of men and of nations was at hand. This Son of Man, Who had appeared in great humility, would be revealed in His own proper glory to the kindreds of the earth, and to each one of those kindreds. Before Him would be gathered all nations. Every eye would see Him. He would be revealed from Heaven. This language may be called figurative: I apprehend, that if the fact of an incarnation is once admitted—if we attach any distinct sense to that fact—the language is strict and scientific. If the condition of man be that which the coming of a Christ in our nature declares it to be, there must be exactly this trial, exactly this judgment of nations, to see where *they* are standing,—of every individual man, to see where *he* is standing. The nation which had rejected the Son of Man, which had striven to hold together without Him, was rent asunder with a great crash. Fragments of a building which had been rising for two thousand years were whirled to the ends of the earth. In the crash and downfall the illuminated eye saw the sentence upon the nations. God *had* come to judge the earth. He *was* taking the heathen to His inheritance. An old age was passing away; a new age was beginning. And what concerned mankind, must concern every man. Any given man might or might not have heard the Apostolical announcement of the Son of Man. But he must stand before the Son of Man. He must, by the very law and condition of his existence, be brought forth into

that Light which had been his light; which had enabled him to perceive or know anything upon earth; which had been making him aware of his own acts and thoughts; which had been showing him to himself. He may have found ways of shrinking from that light, of quenching it. Now such arts will be impossible. He must be seen as he is; for he is not now amidst mists and shadows, but in the full brightness of the noonday sun.

III. You will see, then, I think, how impossible it was that this Advent of our Lord to judgment should not be included in the Gospel which the Apostles preached to men; how utterly inconsistent with itself that Gospel would have been if it had contained no announcement of such an Advent. Was Christ actually such a Being as they said He was, and was He to remain always hidden? Was not the revelation of Him to man implied in His existence and in man's existence? Must not such a revelation be infinitely desirable, if Christ's coming in the flesh of man was to be desired? And must it not have seemed to the Apostles the highest duty to set forth this revelation and this Judgment, not as a distant possibility, but as a certainty, *the* certainty upon which men might safely act, whatever else in their future was problematical and an insufficient ground for action?

But now substitute for this idea of an Advent, the mere notion of a birth taking place at a certain period in Bethlehem; of that being the birth of the Founder

of our Religion; of that being the birth from which we date our time, as the Mohamedans date theirs from the flight of the prophet to Medina; and see how inevitably all the conclusions which seemed so natural to the Apostles, become utterly unnatural and incredible to us. We may give what glorious titles to our Lord we please; but in that case He is but a Man exalted above men, not the Root and Head of Humanity. There is no "great humility" in His appearances on earth, or His doings on earth. On the contrary, He seems to begin from the lowest ground, and to rise by degrees to a higher one. And then, though we say that we believe that He shall come to be our Judge, it is merely as we might say, we believe any one else shall come to be our judge. The Judgment we expect is not of a Person Who is near to us, Who has to do with our lives at every moment, to Whom our thoughts are open and naked at every moment; but of one who is standing aloof from us, who, till that day, is leaving us very much to take our own course, to settle for ourselves, without persuasion or remonstrance on his part, what we shall do and what we shall be. How can the thought of such a being, appearing all at once to decide upon the eternal destinies of us and of all human beings, be other than a thought from which we shrink; for their sakes, if we count ourselves as better than they; for ourselves, if we have taken any right measure of our own delinquencies? What hinders the expec-

tation from being appalling, but the feebleness and vagueness of it; the shortness and rareness of the moments in which we present it to our minds? No warnings of divines can prevent us from falling back upon the old question, "*Where is the promise of His coming,*"—upon the old argument, "*Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world.*" Nay, can Churchmen themselves be prevented from saying in their hearts, "*Surely the Lord delayeth His coming,*" and consequently from beating the men-servants and the maid-servants, as if He had left a household which He had deserted, to their mercy?

IV. But the question can be answered: the argument is untenable. It has been more confuted for Churchmen than for other men. All things have *not* continued as they were, since the fathers fell asleep. There have been changes and revolutions; the mere vestures of truth have been worn out; untruths have been laid bare; the world has been subject to continual trials and judgments; only that which could not be shaken has remained. In vain Christ's ministers have affirmed that all His powers have been delegated to them, and that they were at liberty to use them for cursing instead of blessing. He has fulfilled his own word to His Church, "*Lo, I am with you always.*" He has appeared to avenge their daring assumptions; to maintain the cause of the helpless whom they were oppressing; to show how little He

needed them for the vindication of His truth. Because He was sitting on the throne, judging right, the Eastern Churches, already withered by controversies, effete for any moral purpose, causing His name to be blasphemed through their divisions and corruptions, quailed and sank before the Mussulman hosts, possessed by a mighty conviction, actual believers in a God. Because He was sitting on the throne, judging right, the Churches of the West, still grounded in the faith of His divinity and manhood, could resist that shock, and grow into a united Christendom. Because He was sitting on the throne, judging right, the traditions of ages, the might of Emperors and Popes, were not powerful enough to withstand the words which issued from the cell of a poor German monk. Because He has been sitting on the throne, judging right, the dogmas of sects have been as powerless as the dogmas of the hierarchy, to establish any permanent and abiding influence over mankind,—both being utterly feeble, except so far as they testified to some aspect of His character, to some part of His dominion. Here are testimonies and assurances that the covering which has been over the face of all nations, which has concealed from them their true King and Deliverer, shall at last be taken away; that all things shall be gathered together in Christ. And powerless as all fancy pictures of this final Advent to Judgment have been, to hinder any crime or encourage any virtue, the simple proclamation of it as a truth has not been

powerless. For God has been testifying in the conscience of each human being, that the hour is at hand when *he* must be tried and judged; when he will be asked by the Son of Man whether he has owned or despised Him in the least of his brethren.

We shall not be able to thrust the thought of a Judgment Day into a corner, as we have done; to reduce it into a school dogma or a child's picture. It will come with the sternest reality; in the council-chamber, in the exchange, it will meet us; it will glare upon us through Indian mutinies, through commercial panics. We shall feel that One Who we thought was in the distant Heaven, is concerned with our deeds and schemes upon earth. Oh! shall not we learn also that it is good for us to be judged; most miserable for us to escape judgment? Shall we not believe that that which doth make manifest, is Light; that Light is always an armour which we may put on; that darkness is always an enemy with which we must fight? Shall we not understand that Christ came in great humility to deliver us from our own darkness, that we might be brought into His marvellous light? Shall we not think, that to enter into the full possession and enjoyment of that light, is to rise to the life immortal which he has won for us, and which dwells perfectly in Him? Shall we not look forward, as Apostles and Saints of old, to His full revelation, believing that He will then indeed take the Nations to His inheritance; that the

earth will be filled with His glory? Shall we need to introduce confused notions of space and time, to bewilder our belief that when He is seen as He is, all the quick and the dead,—all, in every age, who have been sharing His light—whether they have known His name or have never heard it—whether they have walked in His Light or in their own darkness,—must be brought unto Judgment? Shall we not rejoice in the expectation of that Judgment, because we are sure it will be without error and corruption; because it will scatter all that is vile and hateful, and that maketh a lie; because it will be the Judgment of Him Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time?

Second Sunday in Advent.

(NOT PREACHED.)

December 6, 1857.

ROMANS XV. 4.

"THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE."

MANY persons are asking, "How can we recommend the Bible to Hindoos and Mussulmans? How can we show that it has an authority which does not belong to the Vedas or any later books which Brahmins account sacred; to the Koran, which the Prophet is said to have received by express dictation? With what apologies shall we go forth to convince the learned? How shall we bring those who are ignorant to feel that a book so strange, so utterly unlike any to which they have been accustomed, has any claim upon their attention?"

Various answers,—all plausible, all containing suggestions that may be worthy of reflection,—have been made and will be made to these inquiries. I think that perhaps St. Paul may give us more light respecting them than any modern doctors, however well they

may seem to be acquainted with the circumstances of our age. For he was forced to consider this very subject. He was the Apostle of the Gentiles. The Scriptures he knew—those which had been the food of his childhood, and were the food of his manhood—belonged to the Jews. They were indeed translated into Greek; perhaps, from his education at Tarsus, he was more conversant with the translation than with the original. But the history in them was the history of a peculiar people, a people separated from the other peoples of the earth; the songs, the maxims, the discourses in them referred to their history, asserted the distinction of the Jews, rejoiced in their past triumphs, and foretold fresh triumphs,—appeared to speak of other races as doomed to overthrow or perdition. What was he to do with these Scriptures? How could he hope that they would ever make their way among the very heathens whom the highest authorities, the most learned commentators, those under whom he himself had studied, believed that they shut out from the favour of God?

It was a tremendous doubt, complicated still further—not only by the earliest, the most deeply fixed habits of the Apostle's own mind—but by the opinions of those who had embraced the Gospel. There were respectable Jewish converts who taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised, before they could in anywise apply the meaning or the promises of the Scriptures to themselves. There were Gentile converts—

men calling St. Paul their spiritual father, confident that they had caught the pure sense of his doctrine, —who imagined that the Law was in direct contradiction to the Gospel, that the books which contained the Law could only be precious to them as illustrating their immense superiority to those who received it or still clung to it. There were Alexandrian converts who spoke of the letter of the old Scriptures as comparatively worthless, but as containing a deep philosophy, a hidden lore, which the initiated were enabled to search out, to preserve, perhaps to expand.

Which of these opinions did he embrace, on which did he act? The Epistle which is chosen for the Second Sunday in Advent, that from which my text is taken, that on which our Collect is founded, is the classical passage on the subject. There he speaks expressly of the use of the Jewish Scriptures to Gentiles. He quotes passages from the Old Testament vindicating the application of them to Gentiles. He speaks of our Lord as a "*Minister of the Circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His Mercy.*" He adopts one of the very phrases which must have been often in the mouth of his Jewish opponents, and turns it to his own account. He speaks of a *Root of Jesse who should rise to reign over the Gentiles, and in Whom the Gentiles should trust.* And he ends as he had begun, by treating the encouragement of HOPE as the great

benefit and blessing of the Scriptures. He prays the *God of* HOPE *to fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in* HOPE *through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

This is a different way of looking at the subject from any one of those to which I have alluded. At first, one may feel a difficulty in connecting it with any of them. Strict Jews, exclusive Gentiles, philosophical Alexandrians, might each complain that it did not meet their difficulty, but left it just where it was. "Hope," they might say, "is of course one of the emotions which the reading of the Scriptures produces. So also is Fear. But how can you explain their suitableness for Jews or for Gentiles, their bearing upon one age, or another age, or all ages, by fixing on this particular influence that proceeds from them?" The objection sounds reasonable. Let us see how it might be refuted by actual experiment.

I. Let us suppose St. Paul turning to those who thought the Old Scriptures had an exclusive reference to the Jew. The ground for their claim was obvious. The Scriptures, from first to last, were speaking of a covenant with a particular family; of the methods used to fence off that family; of the sins into which it had fallen, through contact with the nations round about; of the punishments which had avenged those sins; of the blessings which appertained to the faithful Israelite; of the curse which every lapse into idolatry

involved. It was not the letter only of special texts, but the scheme and analogy of the whole record, which appeared to justify this interpretation.

"Be it so," says the Apostle. "I understand this plea as well as you can. I have felt the force of it more than any of you. And since I have discovered these Scriptures to be books of hope, I have felt the worth of that separation of our race, of that careful discipline, of those protests against idolatry, of that terrible sentence accumulating from generation to generation upon every idolatrous practice, as I never felt it before. For I have perceived that that separation must have an object; that it cannot by possibility be an end in itself; that its end must be such a manifestation of God as there has never been in the world yet; that its end must be such a dominion of God over men as there has never been in the world yet; that its end must be the extirpation of idolatry. Less than this I see cannot satisfy the express words of Holy Scripture, the promises upon which holy men lived and died, the desires and longings which were kindled in them, and which they felt not to be the most unreal, but the most substantial portion of their lives. These words, then, of the Prophets, respecting the Gentiles, are not casual words, exceptions in the general course of their thoughts. They explain whither their thoughts, in their highest, which were yet their soberest, moments, were tending. They explain how much higher God's

thoughts were than their thoughts; how true it is that if men are able to hope at all, it is because He in whose image they are made is the God of Hope."

And this I think would have been St. Paul's answer to the notion about a balance of hope and fear which these Scriptures are supposed to preserve. There are two kinds of fear which they inculcate. There is a fear of all the evil consequences which ensue from distrust in God; from thinking of Him as an enemy and not as a Deliverer; from supposing that His presence is not with the host, or that He cannot provide bread in the wilderness. The Scriptures are ever pointing out signs and examples of these evil consequences, are holding them forth as warnings to after-generations. And by doing so they are giving the most unbounded encouragement to trust and hope, to the continual acknowledgment of God as the Inspirer of Hope, as the Fulfiller of Hope. There is another kind of fear which these Scriptures are encouraging. It is what they describe as the fear of the Lord, the fear of the righteous God Himself. This was a fear which the worshipers of visible gods could not cherish. Such gods might be played with, trifled with, scolded, even by those who trembled before them. The old comedies of Greece prove it. The language of the modern Italian peasant to *his* idols proves it equally. Awe must be reserved for that which we feel to be substantial and holy, for One Whom we did not make, but Who made us. The

fear of Psalmists and Prophets was for the God Who had brought them with a high hand out of the house of bondage, for the God Who was faithful, just, long-suffering. "*There is forgiveness with Thee,*" they said, "*therefore shalt Thou be feared.*" Their countrymen who had lost their faith in such a God as this, who believed in a God unmerciful, unforgiving, from whom it was a blessing to escape, were cowards; but they had not one particle of the fear which the holy men spoke of; *they feared where no fear was.* The others feared God because their hope was in Him. Take away their hope, their belief in Him as a God of Hope, and their fear would have vanished with it.

II. But there were those, I said, who vaunted loudly of the Gospel which was preached to them, of the New Covenant into which Baptism had admitted them, and therefore spoke scornfully of the Law, and of the Old Covenant. St. Paul could surely understand this state of mind also, seeing that language which he had himself used, which was characteristic of him, furnished the justification of it. He had contrasted the Gospel with the Law; he had declared the weakness of the Old Covenant, the strength and depth of the New. Could he evade the force of his own discourses? What nice distinction could he draw which still saved the credit of the old books, without obliging him to say that he had claimed privileges for the Gentiles which were not theirs? He resorted to no evasions; he was provided with no

nice distinctions. This one principle, that the Scriptures were Scriptures of Hope, enabled him to show the Gentiles that they would be making the most enormous sacrifice, if they renounced their claim to the treasures of the Jewish Books, if they severed their Church from the Church of the Fathers. Everything in the stability of their faith depended upon the question, whether they looked upon it as having suddenly dropped from Heaven in the reign of Augustus, or as the unfolding of that truth which had been from the beginning, as the revelation of Him Whose goings forth were from everlasting. If they received the Jewish Scriptures, as testimonies of the method by which God had been preparing the world for the manifestation of Him Who had been before all worlds, and by Whom all things consisted, they would have a sense of the permanence of God's counsels, of the permanence of God Himself. If they rejected these Scriptures, and chose to date the commencement of their Church from the time of our Lord's Advent, or from the day of Pentecost, they would have no sense of a progressive revelation, of a light waxing brighter and brighter to the perfect day. They would think that the principles of the Divine government were changed, not discovering themselves from age to age. They would think that the God of the old world was not the God of the new; that the one had conquered the other.

What would be the effect of this habit of feeling

upon their thoughts of their own Gentile forefathers? Would *they* rise in greatness as the Jewish people fell? No. There would be no witness of the Light which had been lighting them through all their dark pilgrimage; no testimony that the righteous Being, Whom they had confounded with the works of His hands, had not forgotten them, but had watched over them, had been making Himself known to them, had been preparing them for a better day. There would be no longer the Jewish Scriptures, to speak of One Who was a God of Righteousness and without iniquity, a God Who cared for all the families of the earth. The history of each nation would only look like a history of successive delusions and impostures. The glorious deeds which had been done, and thoughts which had been thought, by the heathens of old, would be referred to some evil origin.

What would be the effect of this rejection of the Old Scriptures upon the time to come? That very distinction of Law and Gospel, which had been the plea for it, would be obliterated. The New Testament Church would make its own Law, and would set that Law above the Gospel with which it was entrusted, or would confound one with the other. Discarding the testimony of the Old Scripture against idolatry as inapplicable to its condition, it would introduce a new system of idolatry, more complicated, more difficult to eradicate than that which it superseded, because investing the habits and notions of Heathenism

with the dress and titles of the New Dispensation. It would make the world no longer a world of Hope; rather a world of dark fear and dread, which must look up, not to a God of Hope, but to one who was waiting to cast his creatures into utter despair.

III. St. Paul could have had as little difficulty in understanding those who sought for a mystical meaning beneath the letter of Scripture, as the maintainers of either of the opinions which I have been just considering. He had said himself, "*The letter killeth; but the spirit giveth life.*" Probably no one had ever suffered more from Rabbinical commentators, who were the slaves of the letter; no one knew them so well. But the spirit which revealed itself to him beneath the letter, was the spirit of the Son of Man. He found Him speaking in all the words of the Book to the hearts and consciences of men. He would suffer no phrases or maxims to be substituted for the living voice of the living Teacher, or to intercept the communication between Him and His disciples. He was never therefore in search for peculiar or recondite meanings. The most human meaning, the one which found its way most directly to the inner mind of the most ordinary mortal, was that which bore for him the clearest tokens of a Divine origin. The forms and modes of the utterance might be various, for those to whom they were addressed were various. But in every case the Divine Mind was seeking, not to wrap itself in veils, but to strip off the veils which are over

the minds of men, and hinder them from apprehending it. The parable was the simplest, most natural way of imparting truth to those whose ears were dull of hearing. The moment the ears were unstopped, Christ would declare the mysteries of His Kingdom, would speak plainly of the Father.

How different was this conception from that of those who thought the vulgar only capable of coarse, palpable imitations or counterfeits of truth, who would not scruple even to feed them with falsehoods, that the contrast between them and the wise might be the more conspicuous! But whence arose this difference? Because the Apostle looked upon the Scriptures as written for men's learning, that they through patience and comfort of them might have hope. Because the whole education of man by his Maker, he regarded as an education of hope; every new hill that is surmounted opening some larger vision; every level plain and dusty road that is traversed leading still to some end. Because he believed that the knowledge of God, which is eternal life, was that for which He formed, not sages or saints, but men, in His Son. Because he looked forward to the removal of one obstruction after another to this knowledge, till the earth should be filled with the glory of the Lord, and all flesh should see it together.

IV. I have said that I believe St. Paul can give us a help, in some of our most pressing and immediate difficulties, which modern teachers cannot give. Per-

haps I should have said first that he can show us what kind of help we need, and where it is to be sought. One who feels more strongly and keenly than most of us, that there is an immense separation between St. Paul's tone of feeling and thinking and our own, has observed that there never was an age in which Hope was so little alive as this. The two opinions sustain and elucidate each other. Our difference from the mind of St. Paul is explained at once, if the spirit of hope, which filled and possessed his heart, has departed from us. If that statement be true—and how much ground there is for it, the conscience of each one of us testifies—the apostolical tongue must have become an unknown tongue for Christians of the nineteenth century. As long as this gulf exists, I cannot imagine that the most learned criticism, or the loudest expressions of reverence for the authority and Divine origin of the Scriptures, will bridge it over. We may understand more of the text of the Scriptures, more of all the habits of the people which the Scriptures speak of, than our fathers did; fifty thousand copies of them may be circulated in our days for one that was circulated in theirs; we may be immeasurably more jealous than they were of any doubts respecting their genuineness, of any confusion of them with other books; and yet the Book may teach us less than it taught them; it may be less dear to our hearts than it was to theirs; just because it did find in them something of hope to entertain it

and translate its letters into life, just because that hope is dried up in us, and so the letter remains a mere letter, or becomes a killing letter. Wherever it is not so,—wherever you find persons on sick-beds, in lonely hovels, to whom, with few outward aids, the Book has interpreted itself, has become indeed a Word of Life, it is because the Spirit of Hope has come to that sick-bed, to that lonely hovel, and has discovered in the words man's proper nutriment, the encouragement and assurance for which he craves.

V. Are then all the advantages which we have over our fathers, the experience of history, the severity of criticism, the manifold illustrations of former ages which travellers and philologers and even students of nature are daily contributing, to be wasted or to be of no avail for these Scriptures, because this one gift is wanting to us? May we not rather say, my brethren, that God is teaching us at this very time how needful and precious all these treasures which He has bestowed upon us are; how ready He is to impart that one which we think has been withheld? A world of old faiths and old traditions is unfolded before you, a world of books containing these faiths and traditions, a world of men, either governed by them or just ready to lose them, not knowing what shall replace them. And this world is placed under you. You have conquered it and are reconquering it, not chiefly by arms and physical force, but by the might of moral energy, endurance, hope. You know that when you

have so reconquered it, your work is only just beginning. You have then to re-civilize it, to lay the foundations of its civilization on quite other foundations than those on which they have stood hitherto. You want to know by what means you shall recommend your sacred books to a people who have so many of their own, how you shall make them feel that yours have an authority which theirs have not. I answer, not speaking my own words, but the words of him whom we call the Apostle of the Gentiles, of him who we believe was the means of spreading the Gospel through the nations of the Roman Empire, who announced the foundation upon which the civilization of Christian Europe was to stand; "Proclaim your book to be a book of *Hope:* show that you think it is so, show that it fills you with hope for yourselves and for mankind. Then the difference between it and other Shasters, let them claim what antiquity thay may, let them allege what derivation they may, will be bright as the noonday sun. Then the difference will not be a dry, hard one, to be ascertained by minute comparisons, by special-pleading apologies, by denunciations of that which has been dear to those whom you are wishing to move. It will manifest itself to the conscience of men in the sight of God. They will feel that it is a book of hope, because it kindles hope in them, because it delivers them from a gloom and despair from which nothing that they have heard before has delivered them."

I need not stop to prove that the largest knowledge we can obtain of all that the people among whom we go have been thinking and uttering, will be of unspeakable worth to those who are preaching this Gospel of Hope, who are pointing out the applications of these Scriptures of Hope to men in circumstances the most unlike those in which they were written. I need not show that such knowledge will be turned to the best account, and will be likely to prove of most avail, when it is not used for the purpose of confutation, but of illustration, not to expose false notions, but to bring out the whole truth which both exposes and destroys them. Nor need I prove that simple men, with only a small amount of this knowledge, if they are endued with strong sympathy,—if they have the art of recognizing a brother through all outward disguises,—if they are glowing with the life of hope,—may do great works, and exercise a mighty power, provided they know, as *such* men will know, what they cannot do, what they must leave to men trained in a different school, fitted with other armour.

But the subject of which I must speak—for if we are not clear upon it, all these remarks are utterly futile—is the possibility of our acquiring that quality in which we have too much reason to think that we are most of us sadly deficient, though it has been wonderfully awakened by suffering and necessity (why may I not add, despair?) in our Indian soldiers,

and in the civilians who have become soldiers when none other were to be had.

I have partly indicated how this blessing may reach us. *We* too may gain it through despair. We may find that we have no fountain of hope in ourselves; that the springs which at one time we fancied were inexhaustible, are almost dry. And so we may learn, as we have never learnt before, as our fathers never learned, what is the force of that expression of the Apostle,—that strange expression to which I have referred already,—GOD OF HOPE. Which of us would have dared to adopt such a phrase, if St. Paul had not sanctioned it and issued it? Which of us would not have found it inconsistent with some theory he had formed of the Divine Omniscience or Omnipotence? And so it is, incompatible—absolutely incompatible—with all theories, and with all high-sounding abstract titles, by which we have circumscribed the Divine Nature, and then flattered ourselves with the vastness of our own conceptions. But, oh, how comely and how reviving does such a name sound in the ears of the actual fighter, whose theories have failed him altogether, whose grand abstractions have vanished into air at the touch of real suffering, but who wants a living God, incomprehensible by His creatures, but able to comprehend and to sustain all His creatures! What joy to hear of a God Who hopes with us and for us, of Whose hope that which is highest in man is the counterpart and reflection! What consolation

to know that there is in Him that fountain of Hope at which our springs may be perpetually renewed! What an interpretation of our saddest experiences, to discover that we could not be acquainted with His fulness till we had learnt something of our own emptiness!

And all such discoveries—this is the most cheering fact of all—are not for ourselves, but to make us better teachers of the world. "How," the missionary asks, before he has any practical knowledge of the field in which he has to labour, "how am I to convince heathen people that the Bible is the Word of God?" He comes face to face with the people whom he is to convince, and another question forces itself upon him. "The Word of GOD,—of *what* God? Am I to convince this worshiper of Siva that the Bible comes from *him?* Am I to leave him with the thought that the Destroyer has sent this book as the interpretation of *his* will? Am I to accumulate evidences, to remove objections against its Divine origin, only that it may be supposed to have *this* origin?" But what can he do? First, I should think and hope he would turn from his doubts to his prayers. He would say, "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Thou Whose perfect Image He is! Thou Whose Will He came to do! Save me from blaspheming Thy name! Save me from perverting the book which is the pure and blessed witness of Thee into a witness for Thine enemy!" And then, might not the

answer to this prayer come in words drawn directly from the Book,—no gloss upon it, but its very letter? "'*The God of Hope.*' It is of Him I must testify to this people. It is to Him I must ascribe these Scriptures. As I do, how all the men and women who are spoken of in them breathe again! How sure I become that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is not the God of the dead, but of the living! How each, as he falls, hands the torch to the next runner! how I see the light growing brighter and brighter, till He in whose hand are the seven stars, Himself comes forth! And when He does come forth, is it not to beget men to a new and living hope by the resurrection from the dead? Is it not to make that hope effectual for all mankind? Is it not to promise a final Advent when He, the Preserver and Deliverer, shall be declared to be Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father? Here indeed is a continuous book, because a book of Hope. Here is that which may cheer those who have kept up, amidst infinite confusions, the dream of a God who makes Himself incarnate, that he may be a deliverer,—the dream of voluntary sacrifice,—the dream of a glorious Avatar! The Book can set these dreams in order, can show how substantial they are, can remove the abominations with which they have been mingled, by telling from Whom they have proceeded, in Whom they are fulfilled."

It might be thought that we should find readier

access to the minds of those who use the Koran, because they recognize the holy men of the Elder Scriptures as theirs, because they do not deny that Jesus was sent by God, because the idea of a sacred writing which is given by God is so familiar to their minds. Facts have not justified, and do not justify, this expectation. There is a harder, more impenetrable front presented to any approach of Christ's Gospel by those who appear to have so many points of contact with it, than by the professors of any other faith in the world. Nor can it be said that the opposition is, in any real or practical sense, weakened by the weakening of all the energies which once made Mahometanism a terror to the Nations. The *vis inertiæ* is mightier for resistance than the vital force which belonged to them in other days. It must be so, it ought to be so. The despair of the fatalist should be more directly antagonistic to a message of hope than even the most perverted hope. And it is a most instructive, a most awful lesson and warning to Christendom, that the names and maxims of Scripture, when they become mere names and maxims,—when they are changed into dead letters or are only associated with fictitious legends—are more than ineffectual; they darken and stifle the conscience; they hinder the voice of the living God from reaching it. The Mahometan theory respecting the dictation of *their* holy book, as far as it has dominion over their minds, makes the understanding of *our* book impos-

sible. A book which assumes man to be made in the likeness of God, because *the* Man is His perfect likeness; which affirms that the Spirit of God dwells with the spirits of men to raise and quicken them; which therefore, instead of treating the words of God as most pure and perfect when they do not come through men,—when they are not connected with the thoughts, struggles, hopes of men,—makes their influence over men, their admission into the hearts of men, their power in awakening all the energies and hopes of men, the test of their sacredness and divinity, must be a riddle to any people who recognize an unclosed chasm between God and Man, and therefore at last worship the letters which they suppose to have come from God, instead of God Himself.

But though this is not the opening through which the hopes our Scriptures hold forth can find their entrance into the Mahometan, there must be *some* opening. No men want hope as much as they do; no men are so forced to betake themselves to dreams of the past (sometimes, it would seem, to the possibility of recovering an empire if they cannot recover a faith), that they may escape the burden of the present. They did once expect to make the world one great Empire of God, from which all idolatry should be banished; they do still look forward to a final Advent for judgment. Let us show them that we cherish both these expectations. Let us tell them that what the arms of earnest passionate warriors

could not effect, in putting down every visible thing which exalts itself into the place of the invisible God, in Heathendom or Christendom, we look to be accomplished one day by the proclamation, "The Kingdoms of the Earth are the Kingdoms of our God and of His Christ." Let us show that we leave outward force to deal with outward crimes, but that for the reformation and renovation of society we hope in Him, Who came upon earth in great humility to claim all powers that the gods of the heathen had usurped, for His Father; to show that the enemies of men were His enemies; Who will come in His glorious judgment, to satisfy every hope of those who have hoped in Him most, for themselves and for mankind.

Third Sunday in Advent.

December 13, 1857.

MATTHEW XI. 2, 3.

"NOW WHEN JOHN HAD HEARD IN THE PRISON THE WORKS OF CHRIST, HE SENT TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES, AND SAID UNTO HIM, ART THOU HE THAT SHOULD COME, OR DO WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?"

THE Gospel for this day was chosen, I have no doubt, chiefly for the sake of our Lord's discourse respecting John. The ministers of the New Covenant are to learn from it the nature of their vocation,—that they are Prophets of the Advent of a King, that they are Messengers to prepare His way, that, however insignificant in themselves, their work is greater than that of the greatest who preceded the Incarnation.

But though the framers of our services may have thought most of the latter portion of this narrative, they could not sever it from the former. Christ's words were called forth by the message which John's disciples brought with them. That message exhibits him, not as the preacher of repentance, not as the

reprover of Herod, but as hesitating about the truth of his own mission,—uncertain whether he had not been deceiving the people when he told them that a greater than he was at hand, One Who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Was John, in this part of his life also, a lesson to the ministers who should follow him? Can the prayer of the Collect refer at all to this question, "*Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*"

I. I have assumed that that question does express a suspicion in the Baptist's own mind. I am aware that he is supposed by many to have devised it merely for the satisfaction of his disciples. We should not say so, I think, if we met with the same story in any other book: I do not see why we should adopt the opinion because we meet with it in the book which is most honest in exposing the infirmities of its heroes. Our Lord's words, "*Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me,*" was part of the answer which he sent to John. Were they not intended specially for him? Were they not addressed to his conscience by One Who knew what was in him and in every man? It would be a great mistake, I confess, to overlook the disciples, or to forget that John chose them to be the bearers of his question. One can easily suppose that they had proposed it first to their master; that they had accompanied it with another: "How could the noblest of all witnesses for God be left in prison, if the Deliverer were indeed at hand?"

Such thoughts may never have been uttered by the Teacher; he may have repelled them when they were presented to him. But they may have stung him all the more for that effort of repression; they may have been far bitterer, more tormenting, to him than to those who were able to put them into words; he may have known that they had not come to him from without, but had only been awakened in his own heart out of a moody threatening sleep. Such, I think, experience tells us would be the process by which such a doubt would be generated and ripened in us; so we attribute it naturally to one of those who are expressly represented to us as having like passions with ourselves.

II. If this is reasonable, it must be also reasonable to conclude that we have here some lesson for the New Testament minister. Is the lesson this, that he should shut his ears to the anxieties and questionings of his disciples; that he should scowl at them for indulging what causes so much pain, perhaps so much self-reproach, in him? I can conceive no more mischievous result from the narrative than that; none so bad for those whom the teacher compels to stifle their most terrible perplexities within them, or to pretend a satisfaction which they do not feel; none so fatal to himself, seeing that he must feign to be better than he is, or must brood over a scepticism which he has not courage to bring forth into God's clear light. No, brethren; the teacher who

wishes to be on such terms as these with the men who look up to him as a guide, is treacherous to them, more treacherous to his own heart. If he leads them to suppose that God is pleased with them for any suppression or crushing of doubts, even those that seem the most injurious to His providence and His character, he is turning their questionings into unbelief; he is training them for atheists. If he is afraid to confess a share in their difficulties,—if he seeks to pass himself off for a being of another and higher nature than they are,—he is hastening to become a hard, unfeeling Pharisee, wrapt in his own security, incapable of human sympathy, treating God as an enemy. He will not be an imitator of John the Baptist, for he was a brave and sincere man; and to adopt this course, is to be out of communion with all that has ever been brave and sincere upon God's earth.

III. There is, indeed, one fear which a teacher may lawfully entertain, respecting these communications. When they take the form, which they do so often take, of insinuations that he has sustained some personal wrong, that he has received fewer rewards, or suffered more, than he deserved; then they speak, not to his sympathy, not to his dislike of hypocrisy, not to his desire of finding out the truth, whatever it is, but to his self-conceit; then they cultivate something in him which he may well wish that they had striven to kill, and not to feed. John's disciples

might be excused if they thought his imprisonment a greater proof that the Deliverer was not come, than the subjection of their country to Rome, or to its own lusts and baseness; but John could not safely cherish such an opinion. If he found himself hovering on the edge of it,—inclined to make that the test of God's fidelity to His promises,—he will have had a sense of giddiness, a staggering sickness, which never overtakes a man till self-love has thrust itself in, to bewilder him about his own position in the world, and the need which the world has of him. Yet how easily the best may be so bewildered; how necessary it is that the best should feel that they are in the same peril as the worst!

IV. I have intimated what kind of doubts, besides these personal ones, might be awakened in the mind of Jews, especially of earnest patriotic Jews, about the possibility of Jesus fulfilling the promises made to their forefathers. What deliverance had He wrought already for Israel? What was He likely to work? He preached of a kingdom being at hand, as John had preached; but what signs were there of the establishment of such a kingdom? He called men to repent, as John had called them. But He mixed far more than John had done, with the sinful; the most religious avoided Him, and He denounced them. These were facts which could scarcely fail to trouble John's disciples; may they not have added greatly to his trouble? He took the one simple, manly course.

He did not balance one argument against another; He did not try to refute the objections which occurred to others or to himself. He sent the disciples to Jesus. They were to ask Him to explain His pretensions. They were to see whether He was the person they were in need of, or no.

I cannot conceive that in any act of John's life he was more an example to later ministers than in this. Disciples come to them, or men who are not disciples, full of doubts whether the Gospel has indeed fulfilled its promises. If these men have courage to say what they think; if they have not conceived an unfortunate opinion that a Christian minister is just the man to whom they should *not* speak out their minds,—just the man who would be shocked at their freedom, or whom it would be uncourteous and cruel to rouse out of the acquiescence in his system to which he is pledged,—they would probably ask him whether Christianity had not been tried for eighteen hundred years, and been found wanting; whether the state of the world at large is not almost conclusive against either its truth or its power; whether the Church, in the most favoured portions of it, by its sins, by its divisions, is not a more overwhelming witness still? When such doubts are propounded by some one who would gladly believe if he could, but who cannot pretend that he believes when he does not, who regards a falsehood as damnable; is it of any use to produce dexterous apologies,

evidence that there are as many difficulties and contradictions in the theories of Deists or of Atheists as of Christians; proofs, generally too well heeded, that this or that conviction, which is held with trembling love and devotion, must, in logical consistency, be abandoned? Is it of any use, I asked, to take this course? I ought to have said, When we take it, are we not undermining the soul of our brother? are we not robbing him of the treasures which he has? And are we not putting the Gospel of Christ in the lowest position conceivable,—a position of mere defence,—as if we knew that it could not make out any claim to be the regenerator of mankind; as if we were quite content to show that it is not worse or feebler than systems which we denounce as having no divinity at all?

Surely, if it is true, as St. Paul taught us last Sunday, that the Bible is a book of Hope; that it can be recommended only to men of any class, Jews or Heathens, in this character, there cannot be a method of pleading for it so unapostolical, so suicidal as this. Men want to know if there is really a Saviour of the world, a Saviour who actually saves;—and we tell them there is a document which they must accept, because we have a set of ingenious arguments which prove that not to accept it is dangerous, and that, being a revelation of God, it does not leave us in *more* darkness than would surround us, if no revelation had been made or were possible.

And is not the real plea for such experiments,—if we would be honest,—that we do not believe God has revealed Himself or can reveal Himself to men? If we thought that the Jesus to whom John the Baptist sent His disciples was and is the Christ, the Image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, should not we suppose that He has the power and the will to make what He is, manifest to the consciences and hearts of His creatures? On what other faith did John act? "If this Man who is called the Carpenter's Son, is indeed that King of Men, that Word, that Son of God, of whom I have borne witness, He can make it evident to my disciples and to me, that He is; He will bring an evidence to us which we shall never obtain by days, months, years of arguing." Is it not so now? Has not the minister of Christ to confess for himself, to confess for his disciples, to confess for those whom he has tried to convince that it is very foolish and wrong not to be convinced,—"Son of God! it is not thus that I can bring my own heart or the heart of any man to receive Thy yoke! My logic and rhetoric are as little able to bind the human will, as they are to bid the winds and the waves be at peace. We want One Who can do both. Amidst the overwhelming wail of outward calamities, out of the confusion and darkness of my own spirit, I cry to thee, 'Show us, O Lord, whether Thou art He that shall come, or whether we must look for another'"?

V. And then comes the answer; from the only voice that can utter it, or make it effectual. "*Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.*" This was the commentary on John's own words, "I baptize with water, He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost." Here were the signs, not of a Teacher, but of a Ruler; here were acts of deliverance. The Kingdom of Heaven was not merely at hand: it was coming with power. Human creatures were learning in their own very selves, in their bodies and spirits, what manner of Kingdom it was. Men were not instructed how they might be made well; the most wretched were made well. They were not commanded to do, and live; a Gospel of life and renovation was proclaimed to them. He from Whom they heard the Gospel, was bestowing the life and renovation. John's disciples were to see, and hear, and report. Their master would have to decide,—each of them would have to decide,—whether this was the Person they needed; whether this was the Person to whom they owed the homage of subjects; or whether they were to wait for a king of another character, governing in some other region, using his dominion for other ends.

We are not told the result. It is quite possible that these two disciples did not confess Jesus as the

Christ. The sight of Him, while he was performing these acts, laid no more compulsion upon them to admit his claims, than it laid upon the Pharisees, who said that by the prince of the devils He cast out devils. And this is for us the most striking part of the evidence. The King to Whom Nature paid obeisance, was asserting a higher sovereignty than that. He was claiming to be Lord over man's will; over that which no force can subdue, which scorns and defies force, even if it perishes in its resistance. The King, meek and gentle, comes not to beat down this rebel, but to overcome it by humility, by endurance, by sacrifice. The strangest of paradoxes! The Divine Will exhibits itself in Jesus as the Will of surrender, of abasement; the will of the creature is that which aspires to set itself above the stars! Which shall prevail? which shall be defeated at last?

That is precisely the problem which those who are occupying now the position which John's disciples occupied of old, have to meditate; that is the subject of the Gospel which the ministers of Christ who have succeeded to the place of John, have to declare. They are not to speak of One Who has come to set the world right, to set the condition of mankind right, by decrees and statutes, whilst He leaves them just as they were,—obstinate and rebellious within, hating the rules to which they must by force and terror submit. They are to speak of One Who could

not prevail by these means, because His kingdom is within; because He baptizes with the Spirit; because He has not established His complete royalty, till He has made His subjects willing in the day of His power. They are to speak of One Who has proved that He is mightier in the depth of His weakness, than the greatest amount of evil might that can be opposed to Him; Who has shown in death that Love is stronger than death; Who by His sacrifice has triumphed over the powers of malice and selfishness, making a show of them openly. They are therefore to meet the objections of men, that evil has a frightful hold upon a world into which the Gospel has entered, over a Church which professes to accept that Gospel,—not the least by disputing or explaining any one of the facts upon which this charge rests, —not by pleading that some one place, or Church, or body of believers, is exempt from the charge,—not by the miserable excuse that unbelievers are worse, or not better, than Christians;—but by simply and honestly appealing to the conscience of each man, Jew, Turk, Infidel, Heretic, whether there is not a battle in him between Light and Darkness, between Good and Evil; and by telling him that the Christ whom Apostles announced to men is precisely that Source of Light, that Champion of Truth, against Whom he is fighting, when he yields to any baseness or insincerity, by Whom everything that is manly and truthful within him has been inspired; by bidding

him consider, yet further, whether the Jesus of Whom Evangelists speak, He Who healed the sick, He Who spake comfort to the poor, is not what that unseen Lord would be, must be, if He took flesh and dwelt among men. Are not these acts—these acts of fellowship with all the miseries of men—those by which He would prove His Manhood and His Godhead?

VI. Arguments drawn from the miracles of Christ, when those miracles are considered as strange exceptions and anomalies, have, I believe, peculiarly little force with the men of our generation. A minister of Christ may attribute this feebleness to the hardness of his hearers' hearts; but does he find that such proofs have much effect in softening his own? It is when these acts are owned by him, not as the attestations of a doctrine, but as the signs of a living Person Who is healing the sick, raising the dead, preaching a Gospel to the poor, now as in the days of His flesh, that they strengthen him to patience and to hope. For then he feels that he is indeed only a minister, only a messenger; that all the diligence which is required of him, is only that he may not intercept the communications of his Master to men, that he may not greatly mar His tidings in delivering them. Then he understands the need which there is of a written record to define the vagueness, to expand the narrowness, of his utterances. Then he understands, at the same time, why a book could not suffice

without a man to speak its words, since readers are so apt to forget that they are not spelling out letters, but listening to *the* living Teacher. Then he is able to bear in some measure the oppression of the remembrance which should be heavier upon him than upon those who use it most as a reason for unbelief,—which will often be to him the temptation to a deeper unbelief than theirs,—that the earth is still full of the habitations of cruelty, that some of the cruelest deeds are done in the name of Christ. For then the thought will be continually present to him, that the meanest in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater in this than John the Baptist, that he is the herald of that Advent which shall consummate all that Christ's first Advent, to save and judge the earth of that day, promised. He will find in every page of the history of individuals and of nations, the tokens and witnesses of Christ's rule over men, the preparation for the complete discovery of it to men. He will receive every baptism, wherein he claims Christ's pledges for infants which He for His part will surely keep and perform; every communion, wherein he gives thanks for the complete sacrifice that has been offered for the sins of the whole world; every burial, in which we commit a brother's body to the earth, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life—as testimonies to that Eternal, Unchangeable Truth which his own slow intellect, wavering faith, insincere love, is so unwilling to embrace, so ready to deny. He

will learn by degrees, with these helps, to look upon the darkest clouds that gather about us, as signs of the Son of Man; hiding His light for awhile, at last to break forth and reveal, Him and not another, to the eyes of His waiting servants.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

December 20, 1857.

2 THESSALONIANS II. 1.

"NOW WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND BY OUR GATHERING TOGETHER UNTO HIM."

THIS verse, you will perceive, is not a complete sentence. It is the ground of an exhortation, the substance of which is contained in the verses that follow. I should very seldom venture thus to dislocate a passage of Scripture. We have no right, for the sake of a convenient phrase, of a useful moral, to pervert the sense of an Apostle. It should be rebuked if we compelled the words of a profane author to receive a meaning which we had put into them. Are we to follow a less severe rule when we are dealing with sacred authors?

But I have no wish to overlook the teaching of St. Paul in the rest of this chapter, while I am examining the language which introduces it. I do not think we can understand one without the other; when we have considered both, we shall see that the former clause suggests and recalls the latter. The Thessa-

lonians had been troubled by some words which St. Paul had dropped while he was with them, which he had emphatically repeated in his first letter, respecting a day of the Lord which was approaching them. A portion of them, it would seem, had abstained from their ordinary work, had thought it unnecessary or irreligious to provide for the wants of their families since Christ was at hand.

He denounces this method of preparing for the Lord, in no soft phrases. Those who would not work were not to eat, those who would not provide for their own were worse than infidels. But this was not enough. Before that day came which he had so distinctly announced, he believed that there would be a sifting of all the Churches; that many members in each, perhaps many societies, would fall away from the faith. Before that day of Christ's revelation, he believed there would be the revelation of an Anti-Christ, of one in all respects the opposite of the Deliverer; of one who would nevertheless attract Jews, Gentiles, baptized men into his circle, and receive their homage. The Thessalonians might be involved in this Apostasy as much as any of those who had put on Christ. The very habits which they were cultivating, for the purpose of recommending themselves to the true King, might prepare them for the work and the service of His enemy. The "*Man of Sin*" might be embodied in the person of some emperor, some Jewish enchanter, some pseudo-Apostle. But

he would collect into himself all the evils which were floating among heathens, among Hebrews, and among those who were sealed with the name of the Father, of the Son, and the Holy Ghost. All would worship him who saw in him the complete representative of that which they were aspiring to be. To warn them, therefore, that they would be exposed to this temptation; that it was not safe to anticipate the coming of One in Whom all good would be gathered up, without anticipating the coming of one in whom all evil would be gathered up; to warn them that the evil would claim their allegiance as well as the good, was to give them the most practical lesson which their spiritual father could give. It was not a too fervent or passionate adjuration to "*beseech them, by the coming of Christ and the gathering together in Him,*" that they would remember what He was saying to them.

I do not however look upon the words merely or chiefly as an adjuration. The preposition ὑπὲρ is more naturally and commonly rendered "for the sake of," than "by." If we substitute that rendering we shall perhaps make his meaning clearer. "Let me beseech you for the sake of that appearing of Christ which I have bidden you expect and desire continually—for the sake of that gathering together of all the limbs of the spiritual body in the One Head—not to let any expressions of mine about that appearing and that gathering together—make you forget that there will be *another* appearing, the appearing of one

who will scatter, not gather,—and that you, children of God as you are, claimed as such by baptism, sealed as such by the Spirit, may reject the Son of Man, and ask for the Man of Sin to reign over you." He does not merely appeal to them by the most sacred and dear of all names, by the highest of all expectations. He makes use of that name and that expectation as a charm and a power to preserve them from the Apostasy, to prevent them from becoming the liegemen of the Destroyer—from swelling his triumph and partaking his doom.

There are passages in this discourse, about the meaning of which we may guess, without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. St. Paul speaks of a certain hindrance to the full revelation of the Antichrist, which he had told the Thessalonians of when he was with them. That hindrance, he says, still existed: in due time it would be taken out of the way; then the Man of Sin would come forth in his complete proportions; then would follow the hour of his defeat and downfall. It was of great practical importance to the Thessalonians, that they should know what this hindrance was; and the Apostle says that they *did* know. To us the question is one of historical curiosity. It may be worthy of investigation, but we may lose ourselves in the inquiry, and so forget that in our day too there is a Mystery of Iniquity working; that in our age that mystery may at last have some visible embodiment; that in our age there may be some outward

impediment which is preventing it from being fully displayed; that, so far as that is a *merely* outward impediment,—be it law, be it an ecclesiastical system, be it what it may,—we cannot trust to it. When the internal evil, the poison which has infected society, has reached the heart—when it has overcome the good which is fighting with it there, the restraints of tradition, custom, fear, which hold in the giant of malevolence, will be rent asunder by him like tow. He must encounter some mightier foe than these; all who know of no other, and depend upon them, will believe him to be omnipotent.

I think that we may enter most fully and practically into the whole lesson which the Apostle is imparting to the Thessalonians, if we dwell on his first words, and consider how these words bear upon our own lives. I see in them a meaning that I think belongs specially to Christmas Day—to this Christmas even more than to most others; that connects together those Advents of Christ which, as I said three Sundays ago, we are so apt to separate from each other, and even to contrast with each other; finally, that tells us what is the internal relation between the Festival of Christ's *Birth* and that Feast, in which we show forth His Death till He come.

I. Severe Protestants in former times, especially the Puritans of England and Scotland, spoke many hard words about Christmas Day. It had a heathenish origin, they said; it was a modern adaptation of

the old Saturnalia; it did not commemorate the real day of the Nativity; Popery was lurking in the very name; we had got rid of the Mass, but here the remembrance of it survived; the most popular of all our holidays bound us to the nations, from the idolatries of which we had separated. It is very likely that the answers which were made to these specious arguments were little understood, and only affected a few. Nevertheless, in Protestant Germany, even in Presbyterian Scotland, even among the descendants of those who called the day accursed, it has maintained its ground; has preserved its social character; has been able to assert that character as somehow involved in its spiritual meaning. There is that here which is too strong for preaching, nay, even for the swords and clubs of iconoclasts. These have been able to hinder the introduction of many foreign practices, to destroy much of mere ceremonial. But they were as little able to shake the observance of Christmas Day as the French Directory were, to substitute decades for weeks. The reasons alleged against it have fallen very dead. What if there was a heathen festival which testified that slaves for one day in the year were men? Was not that a natural and reasonable anticipation of a day which was to speak of liberty to captives? Ought not heathens to have shown that they looked for a Deliverer, that they believed there was a deliverer. The chronological pedantry was as little regarded. *De minimis non*

curat the Gospel any more than the Law. The birthday of ordinary heroes is often unknown, yet men have been sure that they had a birth, and have chosen some day for remembering it. If the Incarnation is a fact at all, *what* a fact it must be for mankind! What a trifle it must be, whether the Babe was laid in the manger in September or December! As little could the conscience of Protestant England be disturbed in its observance by shrieks about a Popish name. What the name signified, the people might not well know; but it seemed to signify something about a bond of union between human beings of all classes and opinions, in all times and places. They knew that they had fellowship with Papists in buying and selling; that they had a flesh and blood essentially like those which Papists have. Their hearts said, "If we disclaim communion with them, in this name on this day, we are committing the sin which we charge upon them."

These were broad, simple conclusions of plain people, arrived at by no processes of logic, far firmer than any logic. And why? The text tells us. It has not been a false instinct, but a profoundly true instinct, which connected the coming of Christ with gatherings together, with associations of kinsfolk and friends, with the most genial human fellowship. God must have put these thoughts into the hearts of men. He must have kept them alive. And those who can see in them only vulgar perversions of a divine mystery,—who do not

hail them as the acknowledgment, half unconscious possibly, but deserving to be brought into the fullest and clearest consciousness, that our race can only be united in a Living Head,—are in danger of dwarfing Christ to the limits of their individual wants and experiences, of regarding Him as their servant rather than their Lord.

But the more we honour this idea of Christmas,—the more we endeavour to seize it ourselves,—feeling that so we are likely to keep the day as God would have us keep it, the more must we lay our account with finding a deep sorrow in the midst of its gladness.

Every Christmas gathering reminds those who take part in it, how families once united are scattered over the earth; what havoc death has made in them; how strifes worse than death have invaded them. One scarcely knows how to think of this present week; what a number of English firesides will be darkened by the recollection of faces which shed gladness over them, and which are seen no more; what efforts, noble efforts, will be made by many to hide thoughts which are always present with them, lest they shall cast their own shadows upon the young. If Christmas were only *a* festival, and we did not know *what* festival, such thoughts would be simply overwhelming; the gaiety would appear the most unreal mockery,—the dressing of a death's head. But look at it as an indication, a prophecy; think of the coming of Christ in the flesh as the preparation and

foretaste of a glorious coming; consider that as the true gathering in of the children to their Father's house, as the time when the word *home* is to find its full signification, when Society shall be a fact, and not a name; look thus upon this Feast of the Nativity, and then all is changed. The face that you have ever known, which expressed the warmest, kindliest greeting, is the herald of a more cordial welcome that is to be; the voice which rings in your ear as fullest of music and joy, was uttering the first notes of a perfect harmony, in which it will one day bear a part. The beautiful things we are conversant with here are not, as dreary moralists sometimes tell us, only delusive phantoms, which are to last for an hour, and leave darkness and death behind them; they are promises and pledges of a light and life that are to survive the darkness and death; they are buds of hope, all the more wonderful for the cold airs which nip them; their feebleness and imperfection, and the cry of bitterness which rises out of our hearts when they vanish, are themselves assurances that they and we have capacities for that which is strong and perfect; they keep alive the sense of immortality in our hearts, when it is most flagging and faint.

Must not this be so, if the Nativity is the warrant for human sympathy and gladness? Did not *that* speak of feebleness and disappointment? There is a promise from Heaven of Glory to God in the highest. On earth all is inglorious and low. There is a

promise of Peace. But the Child comes with a sword; the innocents die for its sake. There is a promise of Goodwill, but factions are raging everywhere; raging most in the holy city. The Birth is the fitting prelude to the life. Thirty years of obscurity and silence; then two or three years in public; still of humiliation, only with flashes of glory between; still of contention, only "Peace I leave with you," but that Peace to be received into the heart, amidst all outward throes of war; still of bitter factions, centring their hatred upon the Son of Man, bringing Him at last to death; only the "Father forgive them" testifying that there is a good Will which is higher than the will to evil. Can you have a more perfect Image of that which is passing in every region where men are dwelling? All *looks* like this; glimpses of brightness amidst a general gloom, the glimpses at last going out in death. Nothing achieved; all hopes blighted. All *is* like this if there is no Resurrection, no appearance in glory. If there is, the bright Apostolical vision of human life and destiny must be the right one; that into which we naturally and habitually fall, the wrong one. We must not talk of *any* hopes which men have ever cherished in any age—hopes of social amelioration, hopes of spiritual renovation—as abortive. All were inspired by Him, all are gathered up in Him, all are to be fulfilled when He comes forth and is revealed as He is. That must be the revelation of the union of all things and all Persons

as they were created in Him; that must be the Manifestation of the Sons of God.

II. And if so, surely the thought of Christ's full and perfect coming—of our gathering together in Him—must make Christmas, which is the pledge and witness of it, a time of awful warning as well as of blessed hope. Do I mean of hope to one set of people, of warning to another? No; but of hope to all people, of warning to all people. For if the gathering together of all as one family in Christ is the fulfilment of the Mystery of Godliness, the entire separation of the brethren of that family must be the fulfilment of the Mystery of Iniquity. For all men to confess that they have an Elder Brother, a Father to Whom they are united in Him; for none to exalt himself above another, or to think that he has a separate interest from another, this must be the perfection of human and divine Society, this must be the heavenly state. For men to feel that they absolutely know no bonds to each other, that each exists for himself,—this must be the destruction of all that has been partially good and blessed here, of all that we have seen the dawn of on our Christmas-day meetings, this must be the state of Hell. And who dares say that this mystery of iniquity is not working in him? What Christian society does not at times exhibit features, which betray a hellish parentage, which might unfold themselves into the full likeness of the spirit from whom they have been derived? Oh! it is not death which is rending

families, nations, Churches, asunder. Christ has overcome death. We may claim His Nativity as the witness that Life has come into a world of beings whom death has severed from each other, to make them one. It is the dark suspicion of our fellows, the notion that they are thinking evil of us or undervaluing us or plotting against us, it is the secret whisper, or the hidden conceit of our own importance and our own injuries, it is this which creeps so stealthily into us which gets the dominion over us, and which saps the sympathies of blood, the cordiality of friendship, the recollection of those that are gone. The meanness of party, the class rivalries, the notion that power is good and desirable in itself, apart from its ends, the grovelling morality and the glorification of what is most sordid, which follows when men have lost sight of their common origin and common interests, it is this which undermines a nation, and lays it at the feet of some tyrant who embodies its evils. And the like habits of mind, carried into a more inward region and mixing with the holiest traditions, adopting and degrading the most sacred names—becoming therefore, in a very terrible sense, "*spiritual wickedness in high places*"—have changed Churches of the living into dens of darkness instead of chambers of Light, till a Voice has been heard out of the midst of them, saying, "*Let us depart.*"

Brethren, St. Paul beseeches us—Christ Himself beseeches us,—"*by His coming, and by our gathering*

together in Him," that we will fight against these tendencies within us, which, if they were to come forth and present themselves to us, would take the form of the Antichrist,—would show us exactly what it is that Christ will at last consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming. We need not fear that or any incarnation of evil, provided we are holding fast by the Incarnate Good. What we have to dread is our own hearts, the possibility of our loving this Monster, of our choosing him to reign over us because we have been moulding ourselves into his likeness, because we wish to be such as he will be. And I know not how we can overcome that dreadful inclination, except it be by setting before ourselves a hope which will not make us ashamed, the hope which Apostles cherished, and which they bade their Churches cherish, not of some blessings which should come to them as the rewards of their faith and obedience, but of the revelation of the Son of God, "*Who shall gather together in one all things in* Himself, *both which are in heaven and which are on earth.*"

III. To keep that hope alive, to fight with the enemy that is continually striving to rob us of it, the day of our Lord's Nativity has become Christ-mas, a day for commemorating the full and perfect Atonement which He has made for mankind by His death as well as His birth.

That word *Mass* would probably less alarm those

who object to it, if they considered its etymology. The *Missa Catechumenorum* speaks of exclusion rather than of fellowship; it reminds us (like the 'fencing' in the Scotch Kirk) of those who are *not* admitted to the Lord's Table. But this derivation was soon forgotten in the use of the name; it came to represent the whole worship of God; it conveyed the impression that this worship is essentially the offering of a Sacrifice. As the feeling crept more and more into the Church, that the Sacrifice of Christ was not a complete one, the Mass was more and more regarded as that which did what He had left undone. The idea of his Sacrifice as a *common* Sacrifice, one for all men, is so inseparably connected with the idea of its *perfectness*, that one was sure to be weakened if the other was weakened; so the practice of saying *private* Masses—that practice which called forth the most earnest denunciations of the Reformers—naturally and consistently established itself.

Now, against both these abuses,—against *all* the abuses which have clustered about the idea of Sacrifice in the Romish Church,—we bear a most effectual witness, when we redeem a name nowise sacred or illustrious in its origin, but widely diffused over the nations of Europe—felt as a symbol of their union —for this week's festival. We ought to let all the people who confess the Roman Pontiff as their spiritual head, understand that we too regard all worship as Sacrifice; that we cannot separate Sacrifice from

Christ; that we cannot remember that He was born into the world, without remembering that He gave Himself up to birth and death, that he might take away the sins of the world. We ought to make them understand that we protest against nothing but that which circumscribes this communion, which abridges the fullness of the Sacrifice; that a protest of this kind, so help us God, we will never abandon. And we should beseech them by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together in Him, to consider whether they can safely be less Catholic; whether they can call upon us to fraternize as in a lower and more earthly Name than that of Him who was born of the Virgin, and Who shall be revealed in the glory of His Father.

But, brethren, it is not chiefly for the sake of any impression we may make on those who cast us off (though we should spare no pains to show that our confession involves no intentional separation from any), that I would cling to this recollection of the union between the Nativity and the Sacrifice.

If God, of His tender love to mankind, sent His Son not only to take upon Him our flesh, but to suffer death upon the cross, we may be able to face all those thoughts which this season will call up in so many. As they eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, they will be still one with those whom sickness or violence has torn from them; they can be confident that those most dear to them are keeping a more

perfect Christmas, not forgetting any with whom they kept it in other days; they will not doubt that as Jesus died and rose again, those who sleep in Him He will bring with Him. As we eat that flesh and drink that blood, we may feel that Christ is binding us by the mightiest of all Sacraments to Him, and to all from whom our own evil natures and the evil spirit would tempt us to be separate; that Christ has been born into a world of sin and strife, to the end that He might give us a second birth to righteousness and peace; that He has died the victim of sin and strife, to the end that all sin and strife might die in us.

St. John's Day.

(SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.)

December 27, 1857.

MATTHEW VIII. 11, 12.

"AND I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT MANY SHALL COME FROM THE EAST AND WEST, AND SHALL SIT DOWN WITH ABRAHAM, AND ISAAC, AND JACOB, IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BUT THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM SHALL BE CAST OUT INTO OUTER DARKNESS: THERE SHALL BE WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH."

THIS is St. John's Day. The two chapters which we have read from the Apocalypse are beautiful commemorations of it. The first tells us how the Apostle himself wished his contemporaries to think of him. He had borne witness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ. He was their brother and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. The second tells us what that Kingdom is in which he lived, and for which he waited.

I have had other occasions of speaking to you of this Apostle's testimony concerning the Word of God. I have spoken recently from a memorable passage in

the Apocalypse, concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and the saints who dwell in it. The text I have chosen is from St. Matthew. It too is a testimony concerning the Word of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. It may show us how wonderfully the doctrine of St. John explains the doctrine of those who went before him; how fitly the Apocalypse winds up the New Testament; how its truths, whether delivered by St. John or any other, expound Christmas Day to us, and may prepare us for a New Year.

St. Matthew's words follow the story of the Roman centurion, who sent elders of the Jews to ask our Lord that He would heal his servant. I referred to him not many Sundays ago, as an illustration of the deep and practical divinity which a man might learn in a camp. He had soldiers under him; he was himself under authority. It was not by physical force that he ruled his men. It was not by physical force that he was ruled. He said, Go, and the men went. He said, Come, and they came. This mighty power lay in *words*. The soldier observed it and considered it. Must not there be some power not physical, not visible, from which this power flowed? Must not some one be speaking to him,—speaking to his very heart,—whom he was bound to obey? Was not this his Lord? Was not this the source and spring of his life?

To what did these thoughts lead? He heard of One Who was going about healing sicknesses. He con-

sidered, "If this Jesus can heal, it must be because the Word of God is with Him, is in Him, perhaps because He is this Word of God Himself. There is no need that He should come into my house; I am not worthy that He should. Let Him speak and it will be done, as my commander speaks and I obey, as I speak and my soldiers do my bidding."

And our Lord said, "I have not found this faith in Israel. Even in the best of you who read the Law and the Prophets I have not found such a discernment of the very meaning of the Law and the Prophets as in this heathen. Even in the best of you who frequent the worship of the Temple I have not found such a freedom from idolatry as in this man, who was brought up to reverence the Jove of the Capitol. In all of you there has still been a craving for the touch, for the look. You must have signs and wonders before you believe. There has not been this inward trust, this bowing of the spirit before an inward King. And yet till you are brought to the confession of this Roman soldier, you will not learn why I have come upon earth, what good My coming is to do you or the world; you will not enter into that Kingdom of Heaven of which I have been preaching, and which I am to establish in the world. That is the Kingdom in which your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived; for they lived by faith in a King Whom they could not see; Who was with them where they were; Who watched over their wives and

their children, their flocks and their herds; Who told them where they were to go; Who made them understand when they did wrong. They were learning their place in a fellowship to which you belong; they were getting the first glimpses of a ladder set upon earth and ascending to Heaven, upon which you may stand, and by which you may mount. "But I say unto you, many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with them in this Kingdom, while the children of the Kingdom shall be thrust out."

I. There ought to have been nothing which startled them in the first part of this announcement. The name of Abraham ought to have recalled to them the covenant on which their nation stood. That covenant would have told them of a blessing to all the families of the earth. But they had never understood what the blessing was which they had inherited, and which the families of the earth were to share with them. This Kingdom of Heaven, what did it mean? Where was it? It was at hand. In a few days or years perhaps, they might see the Son of David entering this royal city, as they had heard of a Roman general entering their capital with the spoils of the east and of the west. Or was not Heaven up in the sky, a city or a palace to which those should be transported after death, who had prayed and fasted and done good deeds here upon earth? Whichever of these notions of a Kingdom of Heaven was adopted, or whatever middle opinion, partaking a

little of the nature of each, somewhat less definite than either, took its place, the difficulty was the same in imagining how Roman Centurions, how Greeks or Barbarians from the east or the west, could be partakers of the felicity. In one case they must be trampled down, they must be the kings and slaves to grace the procession of the Conqueror. In the other case, how could these men have earned the rewards which scarcely any but the most religious children of the Covenant could hope to win? What a sentence it was upon those who had been toiling in the heat of the day to deserve their hire, if a multitude called at the eleventh hour were admitted to the same!

A sentence indeed! And even such a sentence Jesus came into the world to pronounce. The gospel of His Kingdom was the sentence upon those who had imagined another kingdom for themselves. The news of salvation to the world was the judgment upon those who counted the salvation of the world a loss and a curse to them. We cannot bring this thought too distinctly and strongly home to our minds. It will make us understand the point which I have been pressing lately, that the coming of Christ as a Deliverer *necessarily* involved His coming as a Judge. It will enable us to perceive why all the Jewish expectations were inverted by His appearing; why it exalted the nations which they supposed were to be condemned; why it laid low the nation which they supposed would have been exalted.

We must adhere very strictly to our Lord's language in this passage, and in every passage where He speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven, and not suffer ourselves to introduce any preconceptions or fancies of our own, if we would enter into this great Christian paradox. The Kingdom of Heaven in which Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were sitting, and in which many from all quarters of the world would sit with them, could surely have nothing to do with either of those heavens which the Jewish imagination had constructed. It must, if the story of the Centurion has any application to our Lord's remark, have been closely connected with the acknowledgment of a mysterious sovereignty over human beings, over their hearts and reins, a sovereignty in which the imperator and the centurion and the commonest soldier were all interested, because they were all within the circle of its commands and of its grace. If Abraham was brought out of a race which was becoming idolatrous,—if he was preserved amidst a race which was sunk in idolatry—to be an early witness of this blessed dominion, of this righteous rule, which should at last break in pieces all dominion and rule that is not righteous and not blessed,—the expansion of this knowledge, the discovery to an ever larger circle of Him in Whom they are living and moving and having their being, was implied in the selection of a person to bear a practical testimony of it. The sphere

of his work was very limited. Soon he would bequeath it to a successor; soon the place of that successor would know him no more. But as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob passed out of the region in which they had spent the few and often evil days of their pilgrimage, they would become better acquainted with that Kingdom which they had confessed, would understand better how it overshadowed this world, would see how gradually it was making its grace and its power known to the children of men. To find ever fresh spirits from earth entering into this kingdom, to see God's army continually increasing, to expect ever fresh discomfitures of His enemies, to give succours and encouragements to those who were fainting in the warfare, to be growing themselves in knowledge and awe and love with every fresh ministry in which they were engaged for their brethren, this was the reward which God had prepared for those that loved Him. If He had prepared any rewards for those who did not love Him, but who sought prizes for themselves and counted the admission of others into their privileges an injustice, these they did not aspire after.

And therefore it could be no wonder, though an infinite delight to them, if the divine Kingdom which they had so faintly apprehended themselves upon earth, was made known through one gracious discipline or another to Roman centurions, to eastern Magians, to Greek sages, to poor sufferers in all ends of

the earth; no wonder, but an infinite delight, if these were taught of a Father's house to which they might return, from the far country in which they had been wandering, and that their Father Himself was fetching them home. Every new age had been bringing more and more into this apprehension. The fulness of the time had come when the perfect Image of the Father was revealed. That revelation opened to the Gentiles the Kingdom of Heaven. And that which was a light to lighten them, was also the glory of the people Israel. All that for ages had been hidden came to light. What prophets and kings had longed for was made known to fishermen. Those fishermen were permitted to enter into the labours of prophets and kings, and to reap harvests of seeds which they had sown, from lands which they had ploughed. The Law went forth in very deed from Judah, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The King of Israel claimed the homage of all lands, and multitudes in all lands bowed their necks and their hearts to His yoke.

II. "*But the children of the Kingdom,*" so the text goes, "*shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" Here again I would beseech you to observe the language of our Lord, and not to change it for any phrases of ours. We certainly cannot make it clearer or fuller than He has made it. He speaks of darkness: St. John tells us why. "*This,*" he says, "*is the condemnation, that*

Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than Light, because their deeds were evil." The Light of the World shines forth upon mankind. Those who should hail it and spread it through the world are scared by it; fly from it, hate it. Either they must establish their reign of darkness, or the Light must prove itself stronger than they are. It does prove itself stronger, therefore they are left to the darkness which they have chosen. It is *outer* darkness; it lies outside of God's kingdom, outside of humanity. God's order has banished it.

Such phrases as these, when they proceed from the holiest and divinest lips, must not be treated like the phrases of vulgar rhetoricians. We are to think of them, not to play with them. When our Lord speaks of darkness, He intends us to consider what darkness is in our ordinary experience, what it is to be without the power of distinguishing the forms of things or the faces of men, of discerning between that which is safe and that which is perilous. He would have us reflect that in our spiritual condition there can be no greater horror than that which corresponds to this; the incapacity of knowing evil from good, that which is to be hated with a perfect hatred from that which is to be loved with a perfect love. He would have us reflect that, as the light comes to the eye from the presence of a sun, light comes to the spirit from the presence of the Father of Spirits; that to be shut up in ourselves without Him is the perdition, the

deepest possible perdition of a creature made in His image.

Is the phrase *gnashing of teeth* less fearfully intelligible? Have you ever been in a madhouse? Have you compared what you saw and heard there with what you read in the Lesson yesterday; how the crowd to whom St. Stephen said, "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye,*" gnashed upon him with their teeth. The Conscience within them said, He is speaking truth. The Devil within them said, Kill the truth. The Devil appeared to triumph. They did their best to kill the truth, by killing the utterer of it. But if it could not die,—if the truth remained and those witnesses to it remained,—must not the teeth continue to gnash? It was the gnashing for blessings very near, but not realized; it expressed the inward conviction that they were gone.

My brethren, the Conscience of men, in all times, has responded so mightily and fearfully to those words of our Lord,—has found for them such a personal application,—that it has been hard to vindicate for them their direct and obvious sense, hard to convince them that when He spoke of Israel He had Israel in his mind, —that the children of the Kingdom who He said would cast themselves out, did cast themselves out in that generation. I think that it is our duty, and therefore our wisdom, to adhere to the letter of Scripture; that if we trifle with it for the sake of extracting good lessons from it, all its power over us disappears.

But I do attach very great importance to this witness of our hearts, that the words cannot have meant more to Judæa than they mean to Christendom, that their whole blessing and their whole terror is for us and for our children. What that blessing is, what that terror is, I believe we shall understand most, we shall feel most, if we consider what was given to the world by the Advent of Christ, what was lost to those who had been the stewards of God's blessings to the world. The Word made flesh, and dwelling among men, opened to men a Kingdom of Righteousness, Peace, Joy; told them that they were inheritors of this Kingdom; showed them how with their spirits they might enter into it; promised them the Spirit of His Father,—the Spirit who had dwelt without measure in Him, that they might enter into it. The Word came to His own, and His own received Him not. They did not confess Him as the Lord of their spirits; they saw in Him only the Carpenter's Son. And so more and more the invisible world became utterly obscure to them; they could perceive only that which their senses presented to them. And so more and more those great possessions, of which the senses can take no account,—Justice, Love, Truth,—the eternal, substantial, universal treasures, which the hearts of holy men felt that they must have or perish, were withdrawn from the apprehension of the chosen people; they became as though they were not. Shadows took their place, they passed into shadows. The

forms which had spoken of them and revealed them, became unnaturally huge and prominent, spectres of the night, sometimes telling in awful voices of that which they could not restore, sometimes for a moment deluding those who embraced the cloud with the hope that they had found the divinity. Then came the hubbub of parties, a Babel of unintelligible sounds, nothing clear but the passion and fury which were trying to express themselves, and which, since words proved so ineffectual, must seek for other weapons.

Is the picture too like? Dare we not look upon it, because it reminds us too much of what might be, of what may be, in the nineteenth century after Christ? Yes. We feel and know that the signs of a Kingdom of God are amongst us; every Christmas Day testifies that it has been brought near to us; that we are living, moving, having our being in the midst of it. It is not far off, that we should say "Who shall ascend into Heaven to bring it to us? Who shall descend into the deep to tell us of it?" But it is with us, close to the heart of each one of us. The Word of God is preaching to us of it there. That Word of God converts every record of the past into a message for the present. Stephen looks at us as he did at the Jewish Sanhedrim, with the face of an angel. For us he witnesses, for us he dies. John is our brother and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ. The Innocents mingle with the children who

are born and die before our eyes. All testify of a Kingdom undefiled and eternal, into which we may enter, the treasures of which are for us all.

And about us all are powers of darkness which would persuade us that there is no Kingdom of Light, which would draw us beyond its circle. They tell us that the world which speaks to eye, ear, taste, is the only real world. We believe them, and the beauty of that world vanishes; what looked—what was—full of life and motion and freedom, becomes dull and hopeless. We believe them, and we became inhabitants of a kingdom that has as little to do with the senses as Christ's Kingdom, which is as spiritual as that; only it is a kingdom of Unrighteousness, of War, of Joylessness. We do not abandon our religion because we become sensualists; but our religion becomes one of terror and hatred; a system of devices to escape from God, to cause the Holy One to cease from us.

Oh, brethren, that Christendom, that England, may never so dally with these powers of darkness, as at last to be brought into that outer darkness to which the children of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob were doomed! Oh that we may never gnash with our teeth because God's Word speaks to our consciences of good things that were ours, and that we would not have! Oh that the warnings of this year—that the deliverances of this year—may be received as God's own loving entreaties to us, not to cast ourselves into

this torment! But whether we receive them as such or not, multitudes will come from the East and the West, the North and the South—at last we believe those Jewish exiles will come themselves—and sit down in the Kingdom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As sure as day rises out of night,—as year succeeds year,—will He Who stood before John in the Isle of Patmos be revealed to the eye of every creature. As surely as the voice of any earthly friend is speaking to us warning or comfort, is He saying, "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every man as his work shall be."

Sunday after Christmas.

(Preached at Christ Church, Marylebone, for District Relief and Provident Societies.)

2 Corinthians viii. 9.

FOR YE KNOW THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT, THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR YOUR SAKES HE BECAME POOR, THAT YE THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BE RICH."

When a beggar asks alms of me, for the love of Christ, can I safely hold back my hand? When I am assured, by persons of wisdom and experience, that I shall do a positive wrong to society if I listen to his prayer, dare I give him anything? These are questions which are troubling a great many of us. They do not concern only the case of the street beggar. They have a very wide application. Some will tell us that almost every time we bestow anything on a fellow-creature, we are indulging a fancy or a sentiment, and violating a law. Some will say that the most indiscriminate kindness is most like the kindness of God, Who giveth liberally to all, and upbraideth not, Who sendeth His rain upon the just and

upon the unjust. These opposite opinions do not only distract us. Too often they drive us to the conclusion that there is no principle at all which can guide us; or to the conclusion more dangerous still, that there are two principles, one of which is good for earth, the other for heaven,—the former to be followed commonly, because it has been ascertained to be true by experience, the latter occasionally, because it is enjoined in the Bible.

Perhaps there is no time when this conflict is likely to be greater in our minds than at Christmas. That season is associated with our old notions of charity. We cannot cure ourselves of the notion that we ought to give then, if we give at no other part of the year. This is not merely because it falls in winter, when nights are long and cold, and work is apt to be scarce;—not merely because the rich then are wont to feast and make themselves comfortable, so that the thought of people starving near them seems peculiarly monstrous,—but because they cannot face the recollection that the Son of God became a poor man among poor men, when their hearts and hands are shut against creatures of their own flesh and blood. We are half-inclined to think that maxims, which in general are indisputable, may be neglected out of homage to the Nativity; that our liberal dispositions ought to be indulged while we are keeping it, though they may need to be carefully watched and restrained when the anniversary is over.

Such a scheme of action cannot be an honest one, my brethren. What is right at Christmas must be right always. Either the Incarnation means nothing, and we should pay no heed to it, or it determines what our thoughts and deeds should be, all our lives through. We should go to it, not to find exceptions from the laws by which men are governed, but to learn what those laws are. It will not, I am sure, encourage or tolerate in us any sentiment which is at variance with principle. It may, if we consider it earnestly, help us to arrive at a principle more comprehensive and more available for practice than either of those to which I have referred, and which will do justice to both.

I. And first: It is certain that if we receive the Incarnation of Christ as the revelation of God's mind and character to men, any language which has ever been used or can ever be used to denote the fulness and universality of the Divine Love and Compassion, instead of being exaggerated, instead of requiring to be modified and qualified, must be tame and cold. When we say that the appearing of Christ is an answer to all the dark thoughts and conceptions which men in any age or country have formed of Him, in Whom they live and move and have their being; when we say that the Gospel of the Incarnation will at last beat down every kind of devil-worship that has prevailed throughout the world,—we speak reasonably, but we only speak half the truth. Not only the no-

tions of God as a cruel, malicious-tyrant, plotting against His creatures, but all those notions and phrases which rob Him of His personality, which represent Him under such names as 'The Divinity,' or 'Providence,' or 'Omnipotence,' become offensive to us when once we think that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in the Son of Man. Then the Name of Father, which Christ proclaimed, becomes the Name which interprets all others, which includes all others. The Divinity which we reverence, is the mind of a Living Father. The Providence we confess, is the foresight of a Father devising what is best for all His children. The Omnipotence which seemed to be on the side of evil, when Christ lay in the manger and the Innocents were slain—when Christ died on the Cross, and priests and soldiers mocked Him,—is shown by the Manger and the Cross to be the instrument which the Father wields for the purposes of His grace, for the Redemption of the world.

So far then it would seem that the defenders of an expansive, undiscriminating charity have much to urge on their behalf. If we are to be followers of God as dear children; if nothing can be wrong in our character, which is like His, nothing right which is inconsistent with His,—there can be no fear of our regarding the race of man, or any individuals of that race, with too much of affection and sympathy, there must be the greatest fear in stinting our affection and sympathy. I think our consciences

fully affirm this conclusion. We may every now and then be confused by solemn warnings which we hear, about the danger of being too compassionate; we may feel that those who utter these warnings are striking at *some* infirmity, some very serious infirmity, in our conduct and in our temper. But when we question ourselves, we find it is *not* the infirmity of having cared too much for our fellow-men, of having made too many sacrifices for them. No one who is thoroughly honest with himself feels that he is open to this charge. He may have talked far too much about benevolence, but he has not been over-benevolent; he may have indulged in a frothy sentimentalism, but that will rise up before him rather as evidence that he has been over-tender of himself than of any one else. The blessing of the Psalmist, on him who considereth the poor, has not been changed, as some appear to suppose, into a curse. Inconsideration is now, as it always was, the source of all curses.

II. Again, if we have not followed a cunningly devised fable in supposing that Christ, Who was rich, for our sakes became poor;—if the narrative of His birth into this world, and of His Life in it, is one to which we attach any sacredness,—it cannot be a true maxim that men should generally be left to the consequences of their own acts, that we should turn away on the other side when we see one who has fallen into poverty or into crime, comforting ourselves

with the thought that it was his own fault, and that we are not to save him from the results of his folly and recklessness. There is, indeed, no history which shows so clearly as the Gospel History that individuals and Nations may be left to taste the fruits of their misdoings. The Son of Man wept over a hypocritical city and yet left it to be trodden down by its enemies. But surely one sin, the chief sin, of that city, of its priests and rulers, was that they were wrapped in their selfish pride and importance; that they spurned the Lazarus at their gate; that they worshiped the letter of the Law, forgetting the meaning and the end of the Law. Their great complaint against Jesus was, that He received sinners and ate with them. His complaint of them was, that they did not look for a Shepherd Who would go into the wilderness to seek after the wanderers of His flock, and that because they would not have a chief Shepherd of that mind, they, the inferior shepherds, had become mere hirelings.

We could not confess a Saviour at all, if we did not believe that men had fallen into an evil condition, out of which they needed to be raised. We could not confess such a Saviour as Jesus, if we did not believe that the worst part of the fall was voluntary; that men had themselves to blame for their greatest calamities. That principle is involved in the idea of an Incarnation. It is carried out into the minutest details in the acts of Christ. He who knew all men, could,

if He had pleased, have fixed on the most respectable, and have bestowed all His blessings on them. He deliberately proclaimed the opposite rule as the rule of His conduct. The Physician, he said, was for the sick, not for the healthy. He cured a man to whom He had need to say, Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee. He healed those who had unclean spirits. He cast the seven devils out of Mary Magdalene.

Most of these acts were done for the bodies of men. Our Lord drew no artificial distinctions between cures of the body and of the soul. He claimed to be the Lord of both. He proved Himself to be the Deliverer of both. His example, then, may fairly be pleaded by those who say that they are not bound, in dispensing gifts and services, to choose the meritorious; who remind us that if we had to prove our title to live, we must all be left to perish.

III. But there is another aspect of the Nativity which requires to be as seriously contemplated as either of those which I have brought before you. It is that which is so prominent in the Collect for Christmas Day. The Father gave His Son to take our nature upon Him and to be born of the Virgin, that we being regenerate and made His children by adoption and grace, might be renewed daily by His Holy Spirit. Christ did not merely stoop to our condition, He stooped to us that He might raise us. He came to assert for those, whom he was not ashamed to call

His brethren, the dignity of Sons of God. And as this was the ultimate object of His Incarnation and Humiliation, so far as we are concerned—it appeared in every part of the work which He did while He was clothed with our mortality. He did not merely heal the sick and cast out devils. He called forth the Faith and Trust of those whom He restored. This was a part, the very highest part of their restoration. "Thy faith hath saved thee," He said to the Samaritan leper, who had already been made clean, like the other nine who went their ways without returning to give glory to God. In other words, He called forth the true manhood in the poor, degraded creatures to whom He came; He awakened them to a sense of their glorious parentage. He led them to look up from the earth on which they had crawled to the living God. He found the sheep He had been seeking. He brought them back rejoicing to their proper fold. And so He distinguishes more accurately between man and man than those distinguish, who denote one set of men as respectable and religious, and another as odious and profane. He spoke to each heart by his acts more than by his words. If there was in that heart a sense of oppression, a desire for deliverance, it responded to His call; it became the heart of a man. If it was violently shut against Him, it endured the worst punishment it could endure; it remained in its previous obtuseness, it grew every day more hard and impenetrable.

Now here, brethren, is a justification, drawn from the Nativity and from the example of our Lord, for those who say that many of our so-called charitable deeds are not good, but mischievous. We need not introduce distinctions, which only perplex our consciences, between acts that are good for Society and acts that are good for individuals. We need not balance the duties which we owe to the one against those we owe to the other. It is clearly not good for any individual that he should live as a mere animal, when God has intended him for a man; as a slave, when he ought to be free; as a liar, when it is his privilege and his right to speak truth. If by our alms we tempt him to be a miserable creature, sustained by chance bounty, selling his soul for pence, we are guilty of our brother's blood; we are not leading him to feel that he is a child of God; we may be, so far as in us lies, keeping him from that new and high life which Christ took our flesh to vindicate for him.

It is on this ground that I would rest the condemnation of that lazy self-indulgent giving, into which we are all apt to fall, and which we know in our consciences has no title to the noble name of Charity. On this ground, too, we have a right to say that many religious institutions of other days were not godly institutions, because they kept up a race of vagabonds who never learnt the worth and glory of labour; who never learnt, therefore, to be brave and faithful; who prayed to chance, and not to their

Father in Heaven, to give them day by day their daily bread. We are not, indeed, called upon to pronounce sentence upon those institutions, as if they never could have been useful, or as if they might not have been turned to a good use when they were most corrupted, or as if they may in no case have compensated by their sympathy, for the wrong which they inflicted by their prodigality. As little need we decide, about any particular instance of almsgiving in our own day, that it was wrongly directed, because it was not in conformity with some rule which we have laid down for ourselves. Rules are most fallacious things; they *will* be continually violated,—I had almost said they *ought* to be continually violated,—because the condition of no human being is exactly like that of any other, and because it is most desirable that each case should be tried, as far as it can be, on its own merits, and should not be labelled according to some arbitrary classification of ours. What we want is, to understand the end that we should keep constantly in view. We shall make many mistakes, doubtless, about the means of effecting it; we shall have to learn by failures. But we shall then at least know when we have succeeded and when we have failed. We shall have a standard by which to try our own acts, and to show us what wrong habits of mind have made our acts defective or mischievous. We shall feel that we are not the least absolved from the duty of helping our fellow-men, by their errors

or ours; by their reluctance to be benefited, or our stupidity in benefiting them. We shall be sure that we are only God's almoners, and that He has found more ingratitude in us—more misunderstanding of His purposes,—than we shall ever find shown towards us, by those of whom we fancy we have most right to complain. We shall be sure that the Spirit of Him Who gave His Son to take our nature upon Him, will impart to us greater wisdom in giving, as well as more sympathy and more faithfulness, in proportion as we feel distrustful of our discernment, and cast ourselves upon His guidance.

I think, then, brethren, that we need not choose St. John's Day as a day for forgetting the precept, that we cannot love God Whom we have not seen, unless we love our brother whom we have seen. I think we need not make Christmas less a time for opening our hearts to the needy and suffering, than we have done hitherto. We may turn any day into a St. John's Day, by taking his maxim as the maxim of our lives. We may carry Christmas through every season of the year, by remembering what it tells us of our divine birth, and of our relation to all the members of Christ's family.

That this lesson may not be a dead one for you, I am going to tell you why I think District Relief and Provident Societies, such as are established among you, fulfil all the conditions which should meet in Christmas Charities. When you relieve as private

individuals, you may do a good which no formal, legal distribution of alms can do, because you come face to face with human beings. But then *you* are felt to be the benefactors; the gratitude, if there is any, is fixed exclusively upon you. When you go forth to relieve as members of a district, you have all the same opportunity of showing personal kindness, and of exercising personal vigilance, as in the other case;—you have greater security that the persons whom you visit need your help;—but you are able to remind them, without preaching, by the very name you bear, that they and you belong to a body; that there is a Christian fellowship for you both; that Christian prayers and sacraments are what bind you to your neighbour and your brother.

This is one thing, and a very great thing. Then I rejoice heartily to find that you join together these words "Relief" and "Provident" in the announcement of your purposes. I do not mean that you can always join them together in fact. You must relieve many who are not provident, and whom you cannot make provident. In doing so you bear *a* witness for the love of God to His creatures,—*a* witness that Christ Who was rich, for their sakes became poor; that witness may not be in vain, even for the highest objects. But if you can convince your poor people that the best relief, the only true relief, is that which awakens them to exertion, to hope, to foresight, you are fulfilling in a far more satisfactory, in a far more evangelical way, your duty to your fellow-men.

I use this last expression deliberately. I am anxious to use it. For I fear that many of us suppose providence or foresight to be a secular, not a Christian or Evangelical, virtue. It may have become such in some cases. Men may have acquired large fortunes by a foresight that was merely selfish; in that case their own wild speculations or the prodigality of an heir very commonly scatters in a short time what it has taken a long time to gather. But I am convinced that if providence is ever to become a characteristic of the poor,—who have so many motives to dissipate their little earnings,—to whom it is not honest to hold out the possible chance of their drawing prizes in the world's lottery,—it must have a deeper root than this. They must learn that the two meanings of the word are not so distant as we have made them; that we are to be provident for our children, because God is provident for His; that it is the glorious characteristic of man to look before and after, because he is made in the image of God Who is, and was, and is to come. Christ took our nature upon Him and was born of the Virgin that He might bestow the divine attributes upon men. Christ called forth foresight in them by calling forth faith in them. He taught them to trust in a Father; to work cheerfully and hopefully, not anxious about the morrow, certain that they might commit themselves to Him Who had appointed them their work, and would give them strength to do it. Christ taught those who trusted

in Him that they were not limited by the instant on which they were standing, because they were sharers of His life and immortality.

My brethren, our poor people will not learn providence by copying the practice of the higher classes, nor of the moneyed classes. Our high classes and our moneyed classes may need to be reformed by them. England may again become a thrifty and provident nation, may be preserved from sinking into a nation of gamblers, by her labourers. If we are to gain that great benefit from them, we must ground their providence upon the Gospel that Christ by His nativity has claimed for them a second birth. As they receive this Gospel, they will not like savages wait upon accident, they will not wish to live by fruits that grow of themselves; they will sow in hope and plough in hope. They will wait for the common harvest, because they will refer it to the same God Who will fulfil all the promises He has made us; Who will show us that all our kindness has its ground and consummation in His love, all our knowledge in His wisdom; Who will perfect every Christmas blessing, when His Son appears without sin unto salvation.

First Sunday of the Year.

January 3, 1858.

ROMANS II. 4.

"OR DESPISEST THOU THE RICHES OF HIS GOODNESS AND FORBEARANCE AND LONGSUFFERING; NOT KNOWING THAT THE GOODNESS OF GOD LEADETH THEE TO REPENTANCE?"

THE year we have passed through has been one, for Englishmen at least, of terrible excitement. The excitement has not been public only; every hearth has shared in it. Had the case been otherwise, had it been a year barren of startling incidents, there would still have been enough in the circumstances of each one of us to remind us of vicissitude, to foretell further and greater changes.

Nevertheless, it is probable that the first thought of many a man on New Year's Day was one of complaint, that there has been so much of dreary uniformity in the past, and that there is so little hope of its being broken. "What reason have I for expecting that this twelvemonth will be at all different from that which has ended? Will there not be the same round of professional occupations? Will So-

ciety be less of a mere machine? will any variety be imparted to its workings? Will my own actions be more free, less regulated by mere accident or routine? Will my judgments be less swayed by the notions and fashions of the circle in which I move? Will not it be with my tomorrows much as it has been with my yesterdays,—resolutions formed to be broken, a chain of petty necessities always proving stronger than the energies of my will?"

The circumstances of those who raise these questions and utter these forebodings, may be very different. With some there may be a recollection of continual, monotonous pain. They may look back to long periods of suffering. They may lament that the punishment has not profited them as it might have done. They may ask, with the weariness of spirit which weariness of body so naturally produces, how they can reasonably expect that the new year will not come charged with a heavier freight of useless sorrow than its predecessor. But the monotony of *pleasure*, is that less oppressive? How many forms of it have been exhausted! How hard it is to invent a new enjoyment; how impossible to compel oneself to enjoy if it is invented! What need of increasing stimulants, as the power of being stimulated diminishes! How that which was intended as an escape from the severity of duty becomes the most exacting of duties! Turn which way you will, find the man whose time has passed most

heavily, or who has the greatest number of appliances for making it pass lightly, and you may still hear the same dismal lamentations over the vanity and vexation of former years, the same prophecy that little but vanity and vexation can be looked for in the present.

It is sometimes fancied that these words, "*Vanity and vexation,*" are likewise to be the chief burden of the preacher's song. So he appears to imitate his illustrious predecessor in the Old Testament; so he may claim the discoveries of the New respecting a future world,—respecting an eternal state,—to shake the frivolity or deepen the seriousness of his hearers. If he takes this course, I question whether he will really draw his lessons either from the elder books of Scripture, or from the later. The Ecclesiastes is surely a very faithful recorder of actual experiences. He is a man walking in a labyrinth. He thinks he sees a passage out of it. He comes up to the point he had in his eye, and is baffled. He tries again, and is baffled again. He has all advantages for the search. These advantages seem to increase the hopelessness of it. The king is more lost than the common man; the wise man has his eyes opened just that he may see the stones in the path, which the fool stumbles over without being aware of them. Apparently religious considerations afford as little comfort as others. "*There be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked.*

Again, there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." It seems to the observer, at one point of his inquiry, that it is not prudent to "*be righteous overmuch, or to be wicked overmuch.*" He repeats such one-sided thoughts fearlessly, like an honest man; the worth of his book, because the verity of his experience, would be sacrificed if he suppressed them. At last there comes a clear beautiful glimpse of light. There *is* an exit from the labyrinth for the beggar as well as the king, for the king only when he casts in his lot with the beggar. He has got little by making schemes of the universe, even if he has mixed thoughts of a Providence with his schemes. But if he will "*fear God and keep His commandments;*" if he will confess One who is governing him, and will submit to His government,—the earth may become brighter; the weary maze may be found not to be without a plan.

Supposing then a modern preacher took *this* book of the Bible for the guide of his meditations and his discourses, he must understand that he is to follow experience whithersoever it guides him; that he is not to warp its conclusions in the very least degree, whether they seem to favour a moral purpose or to interfere with it; that he is to extenuate none of the perplexities of the religious man; that he is to set down nought in malice against the worldly man; that he is to admit not only the plausibility but the worth

of trials which lead to no satisfactory issue. He is not to say that other men find "vanity and vexation of spirit" in their labours, and that he is a privileged person who is free from any such misfortune. All his disappointments are to be personal, not caused by the errors of his neighbours, but by his own. And the discovery to which he is at last brought must be one which is as good for all as for himself,—the discovery that he has been seeking at a distance for a secret that was lying close to them as well as him; that the end of vanity and vexation to a man is when he abandons the effort to create worlds, in each of which he is the centre, and when he finds that there is a Centre round which his own world and all worlds are revolving.

But we should be greatly misled by the use of a title which may or may not represent the sense of the writer, if we took the Royal Philosopher as the type of Old Testament preachers. If we want to know what the *Concio ad Populum* as well as the *Concio ad Clerum* in the land of Israel was, we must turn to the Prophets. They begin where Solomon ends. They assume a Divine order of the world. They start from a God Who has made a covenant with the Nation, Who bids all the members of it fear Him and trust Him; Who gives them commandments; Who promises them a right heart, that they may keep His commandments. The course of empires, the course of individual life, is under the guidance of that Word Who is speaking by their lips. The past, the present, the future

are wonderfully connected. Nothing is indifferent; nothing is sterile. Every work that man can be engaged in may be grand and productive. No doubt every work he is engaged in may tend to evil as well as to good. He may throw his acts into a witch-cauldron, where they will mix with all the elements of strife, all the foul charms, that were gathered there already. But even they who watch over this cauldron know that their hour is coming. Their own skinny hands must point their slaves to crowns and sceptres in the distance, which God will bestow in spite of all their arts. And the true prophet, though he must utter his wailing over the love of vain things which dwells in the heart of the chosen people,—though he must foretell the vexation of spirit which will come to those who trust in their idols,—though he must sing to prophets, and priests, and people, of the utter helplessness of the lies in which they have delighted,—must also declare that vanity and vexation of spirit proceed from forgetfulness of the Lord God of their Fathers; that He is the same as in the days of old; that His counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure; that though darkness may cover the earth and gross darkness the people, He will arise to shine and fill the Universe with His light.

Those, then, who in our days would profit by this example, must feel that it is *not* their business to strengthen or deepen men in the notion that the years, as they succeed each other, only bring fresh

excuses for despondency. They are not to indorse atheistical experience with the authority of God. They are not to tell young men that their youth and physical strength, and all the joyous expectations which should go along with youth and strength, are the devil's delusions, when they are God's precious and blessed gifts. They are not to say that any pursuit is or can be a vain pursuit, is or can be anything but a most serious pursuit, seeing that God has appointed it, and that to God we must account for the spirit in which we have entered upon it. They are not to tell lawyers that law is vanity; or politicians, that politics are vanity. They are to tell them that their functions are awful, even divine; they are to say that any one who deals lightly and frivolously with the mighty trusts and powers which are committed to him, under pretence that he has some religious interest, some reversion in a future state, which he must occupy himself with, and which he cannot afford to neglect for the sake of merely secular duties, may pass well with those who look on the outward appearance, but will shrink and quail before Him Who searches the heart and the reins. Sundays, prayers, communions, the lawyer and politician need, that they may have strength for their tasks; services which make them indifferent to their tasks, are not such as the Prophets urged their countrymen to engage in; they are those of which the Prophets said, that God was weary to bear them.

The Old Testament preacher was, as I strove to

show you lately, in the strictest sense, a preacher of Hope,—of Hope awakened by the very sorrows and punishments which *were* the warrants for his solemnest denunciations; which *seemed* to be the warrants for the most absolute despair. But he was so, precisely because he was preparing the way for the herald of a completed Redemption, of a Gospel in its most perfect sense. A *Gospel* beginning with "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," would be surely the greatest contradiction which it is possible to conceive. It must either meet that natural conclusion—that inevitable result of *mere* experience—with some direct and decisive refutation, or the name is delusive.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ—the Gospel, as He called it, of the Kingdom of Heaven—does profess to show both why the life of man is not vanity, and how it becomes vanity. The life of man, so the Gospel declares, is not vanity, for it is derived from the life of the Son of God. He is the Lord of every man. In Him is life, and His life is the light of men. The life of a man becomes a vain show, just because he does not confess his relation to this Fountain of Life; just because he wishes to have a life of his own; just because he seeks that life where it is not to be found,—in the things which he is to rule, not in the Lord who rules him. From this vanity Christ redeems him. He is not obliged to be the slave of the creature; he may act as the child of the Creator. If he does, he takes his place as a citizen of the Kingdom

of Heaven; every year gives him new tokens that he is; every year tells him how fair and rich the earth is; every year prepares him for the full manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven, for the full deliverance of the earth. If not, outward things become curses to him, not because they are vain, but because he chooses to be so.

The Lesson we have read this afternoon proves that St. Paul, who was emphatically the preacher of a Gospel to the world, did not speak smoother things than the preachers of old had spoken; that he was as stern in his denunciation of hypocrisy and self-delusion as any of them. His words are addressed to his countrymen, who were judging the Heathens as outcasts from God, and yet were causing God's name to be blasphemed amongst the Heathen. He tells them that God's judgments are not partial, as they supposed, but according to truth. No circumstances will exclude any from life and immortality; no circumstances will bring any to life and immortality. The Law was good for those who kept it; the Law condemned those who broke it. Circumcision was good, if it meant that they trusted Him Who gave the Covenant, and forsook their own evil nature. Circumcision was nothing, if it was only outward in the flesh. Those who were contentious and obeyed not the truth, but obeyed unrighteousness, would have tribulation and wrath; that στενοχωρία, that closeness, narrowness, incapacity of breathing, which they chose,

when they shut themselves in their own privileges, and refused to let their light shine forth upon all men.

I refer to these passages, that you may see how little the one I have taken, which occurs in the midst of them, is selected for its tenderness. You might judge from its own character, even apart from its context, that it was much more a sentence of admonition and reproof than of consolation. I accept it as such. I find in it the keenest reproof of the distrust and despondency with which we are apt to enter upon a new year. I learn from it that we are denying the most evident facts of our lives, if we resolve that there is not a Power near us which can make us all that we wish to be, all that we accuse ourselves of not being.

I. The Jews thought that St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, was tempting them to despise the privileges of their birth and election. He retorts the charge. He asks the Jew how he could dare to despise the riches which God had bestowed upon him? What were these riches? The Law and the Covenant were the pledges and witnesses of their wealth; they could be converted into wealth; but they were not the thing itself. They spoke of a living God near to the Israelite, of a God of goodness, forbearance, longsuffering. These names were given to Him in every page of the Divine Oracles; the names were illustrated by a series of facts. The

history of the Nation was the history of a God showing kindness to an indifferent race, forbearance to a provoking race, longsuffering to an obstinate race. In other books you have the records of a *religion*. You are told how a people introduced this worship and that ceremony, how their soothsayers told them of services that they had neglected, how their priests enforced new propitiations. Here you have nothing of the kind. All the religion which the priests or the people introduced—the worship on hills and in groves, the calves, the altars to Baal—is noticed to be denounced; a righteous King proves his righteousness by sweeping it away. The subject of these records is not certain feelings entertained by men towards a higher Being, certain duties rendered by them to Him. The subject is God's feeling towards them, the acts which He performs on their behalf. This was the peculiar treasure of the nation. It was not a treasure given generations ago, and then withdrawn. That which was given generations ago was the testimony concerning a Being Who was the Same from generation to generation. It was not a treasure which could be shut up in statutes or decrees, in the pages of a Book, in the forms of the Tabernacle or the Temple. The statutes and decrees, the Book, the forms, ceased to have any worth if He of Whom they spake was not alive, if He were not living with men, if men were not living by Him. To boast of the Law and the

Covenant and the Scriptures, as if they were not revelations of Him, was to deny and to despise them. To accept them as revelations of Him, and not to believe that He was good and longsuffering and forbearing, was to deny and despise both them and Him. To admit that He was good and forbearing and longsuffering at all, and not to believe that He was so at every moment, to themselves and to all men, was to play with words, to despise their sense, their power, their blessing.

It is even so, brethren, with each one of us. Our New Testament, our Baptism, our Communion, testify of a God good and forbearing and longsuffering. They give each of those titles an emphasis which it had not of old. They remove some impediment which interfered with the belief of it in the men of the old time.

Goodness, when it is seen in the deeds of Him Who went about doing good, loses none of its awfulness; it stands out in more direct contrast to all wickedness; but we know that it is not abstract, that it is individualizing, yet that it is without limitation.

When we hear of God's *Forbearance*, we ask the ancient, ever-recurring question, whether He can care enough for our doings to feel anything like that "provocation" which the Bible speaks of; whether such words must not be merely figurative, or must not detract from His Holiness and Majesty. When we seek to know the Father through the Son clothed in

our nature, we see how purity and sympathy must be provoked every day by impurity and hardness of heart; we are sure that the perfection would be diminished, if it were incapable of pain and sorrow for evil.

The *Longsuffering* becomes intelligible like the forbearance, when we see it in this mirror. Till we so see it, we may ask ourselves whether there is not some boundary to it, which we are obliged to conceive, though we may be unable to fix it. The Cross of Calvary drives our reason from this vain and ambitious attempt. That Cross reveals a height and depth of endurance such as we dare not measure; if we could, which of us must not say, "I have exhausted it"?

Now if this *goodness, forbearance, longsuffering,* belong to the very name and character of Him in Whom we are living and moving and having our being, they constitute a wealth upon which we may always draw. The more we call them to mind, the more we believe in them, the more truly and actively they become ours. We may become moulded into their likeness, we may show them forth. This is that kingly inheritance which the Scriptures and the Sacraments make known to us. Every Old Year speaks of events, strange and common, which have manifested the Divine goodness, forbearance, longsuffering to us, to our country, to the world. The miracle of every morning as it rises out of night has testified to these.

Not a child has been born, not a parent has died, in whom we might not have seen the traces of them. And the New Year is as certain to be full of them as the Old. It too will have its thunders to raise us out of sleep; it too will have its silent, hourly memorials of an unvarying, considerate, vigilant loving-kindness.

II. But here comes in the great excuse for shame and for gloom. We have not taken the events that have befallen us as if they bore this signification; the wealth has been ours, but it has been squandered. We have *despised* the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. And why should it be otherwise in the time that is approaching? What charm is there in a New Year which the former wanted? Why should the passing of an imaginary boundary change death into life? Is not the gravitation to evil likely to be stronger, not weaker, than it has been? Is not the indifference which can take no account of that which is good and gracious certain to augment day by day? Is not the craving for violent excitement which treats all daily blessings as of no worth, sure to grow by what it feeds on? Questions too all reasonable, and to be answered only in one way. But this thought has been left out of our calculation. We have "*not known that the goodness of God is leading us to repentance.*" Events are not leading us to it, sad or joyful, sudden or successive. Our own hearts, left to themselves, will not lead us to it. The experience of our powerlessness to change our

minds, to turn them round to the Light, may be an entirely true experience. But that goodness of God which is with us, is not merely something which we may recollect, by which we may profit. It is an active, vital power. It is the one power which can act upon spirit. It is acting continually upon our spirits. This goodness is the very Spirit of God; that Spirit Who, being goodness, grieves for our want of goodness; being the forbearance of God, bears with us; being the longsuffering of God, will not suffer us to destroy ourselves. It is He Who convinces us of Sin, because we have not believed in Him in Whom is no sin, and Who is always with us to deliver us from sin; of Righteousness, because He has gone to the Father, as the Righteous Head of our race, to justify us; of Judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, and because each year is hastening on the time when he shall be finally cast out.

The Church inaugurates the year with two festivals. One is the Festival of the Circumcision.

If we enter into the meaning of it, we shall believe that all God's discipline in past years has been intended to destroy in us what is selfish and carnal, that the Spirit may graft and renew in us what is human, what is divine.

The other is the Epiphany. If we enter into the meaning of that Festival, we shall believe that Christ's glory may be manifested in the greatest weakness,

because it is the glory of goodness, of forbearance, of longsuffering. We shall ask that that glory may humble us and lead us day by day to repentance. We shall be sure that there will be at last a full revelation of those riches which eye hath not seen nor it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

Sunday after the Epiphany.

January 10, 1858.

LUKE II. 32.

"A LIGHT TO LIGHTEN THE GENTILES, AND THE GLORY OF THY PEOPLE ISRAEL."

Two subjects which appear incongruous were brought before us on the day of Epiphany. The Gospel spoke of the Magians, who were led by a star to the cradle of Christ. The Epistle spoke of St. Paul's preaching to the Ephesians. What connection is there between these thoughts? What has a star in the heavens to do with the sermons of a tent-maker?

A study of St. Paul's words would suggest the answer to this question; it is embodied in the very word *Epiphany*. Not a sermon or a star is the subject of the Epistle or the Gospel, but God's manifestation of His Son to the Gentiles. This manifestation can be as little explained by the discourses which St. Paul delivered as by the shining of an outward luminary. It is to the spirit within that God makes any of His discoveries. Only with this spirit can a man seize any truth, or enter into communion with it. Newton

might have seen a thousand apples fall from the trees on which they hung; there was one which led him to perceive the law of the universe. The object that was presented to his outward eye became the instrument through which an idea was presented to the man himself. A universal truth shone through that special instance. His devout and humble mind would have acknowledged at once that God had led him to the one through the other. If afterwards he studied the speculations of Copernicus and the demonstrations of Kepler, he would have confessed, with all gratitude to his earthly teachers, that they also were instruments by which he was guided to the knowledge of a truth, which would not have been less a truth for them, for himself, for mankind, if no one of them had been able to apprehend it. In like manner the leading of a star, and the labours of St. Paul, are equally unintelligible, if they are viewed without reference to the object of both; when connected with that, each may enable us better to understand the other.

I have taken the words of the old Rabbi Simeon, which have become a Vesper Song of the Church, to illustrate this subject. The best commentary upon them which I know, is found in our Collect for the Epiphany: "O God, Who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, mercifully grant that we, which know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glo-

rious Godhead, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" One can but follow lamely in a discourse, the movements of the spirit in a prayer; but I shall try to keep the method of this Collect before me, and to examine its different clauses.

I. An Eastern sage, believing in a light which was older than the darkness, and which would at last overcome it, associating this light with the luminous forms that presented themselves to him in a still evening,—trying honestly and earnestly to find out what these were and what they signified to him,—was in these very studies sending up a prayer to the Source of Light, that he might be shown his way, which was bewildered with shadows and deceitful fires. Such a man is surely a most interesting subject for contemplation. Yet how mournful a one he would be if we supposed it was all in vain; if his wishes were self-created, and met with no response; if his life was passed in dreams, and death was the awakening to a certainty that they pointed to nothing! Is not the doctrine of the Epiphany a more cheerful and a more reasonable one? If we take it, as we are bound to take the records of Scripture, supposing we believe them, as instances and exemplifications of a law, of the course of the Divine working, is it not good news that God Himself was directing the thoughts of the student of the stars, and of all other students and seekers in every direction, that their disappointments and sorrows and hasty guesses and crude anticipations

were themselves schoolmasters by which He was bringing them,—yes, why do we stumble at the words?—bringing them to Christ, bringing them to the Light which was lightening them, and had lightened every man that came into the world,—bringing them to know that He was there Who always had been there,—bringing them to understand the deepest moral truth, the truth that most concerned their own being, through some common, often-observed incident, and by its commonness to feel assured that it was a truth for all as well as for them?

If we think of Him Who was born at Bethlehem as having never lived till he was conceived by the Virgin, we may lose ourselves in all kinds of speculations about the miracle of that particular star that led the wise men to His manger. But if we adopt the Catholic Faith,—the Faith which was set before us on Christmas Day; if we suppose that the Word Who was with the Father, Who had been with the Father before all worlds, by Whom the worlds were made, Who had always been the life and the light of men, was then made flesh and dwelt among us,—that star will be no exception to the law which all stars have been obeying. They needed not to forsake their courses or break loose from their orbits that they might become instruments of illumination to the inner spirit of man, any more than that they might show him his path through the wood or across the ocean. In each case they were obeying their Creator's high behest, they were glorifying His

calm and settled order, and so were ministering to the greatest as well as to the humblest needs of His children. It might have been indeed a wonder to the wise men, an overthrow of many previous conjectures and high imaginations, a tearing in pieces of many plausible schemes of the universe which they had devised or adopted, when they were led to confess the glory in a Jewish child, born in a Jewish stable, which they had looked for either in some Persian monarch or in some sun of the upper world. But if there was a breaking-down of theories, like that which every true man of science, in whatever department he works, has to endure and ultimately to give thanks for,—what a satisfaction was reserved for the humbled heart of the truth-seeker in the very meanness of the outward vesture, in the discovery that the glory was all within, in the assurance that it was not the less human glory because it was Divine! How many lines of thought and of hope, which had each been visible at times, which sometimes seemed to intersect each other, sometimes to be running for ever parallel without the power of meeting, found their centre in that cradle! While they confessed how little the vision corresponded to what, as *wise* men, as *Magians*, they should have anticipated and wished, the conviction would be brought home to them, that this was what they required because they were *men*, that here was the Son of Man.

II. At this point then there seems no violent tran-

sition to that general Manifestation of the Only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, which came through the preaching of St. Paul, or of any who followed in his steps. It was as a messenger to men concerning a Son of God and a Son of Man that the Apostle went forth. This was his Gospel; and wherever he went preaching it, he found that other preachers had been before him. The rains and fruitful seasons, filling men's hearts with food and gladness, had been there. The sun and stars had been there. There had been thoughts of One of Whom men were the offspring. There had been thoughts of a Judge and a Deliverer. There had been a feeling after One in Whom they were living and moving and having their being. He had no hope from his own rhetoric, from his powers of persuading men to adopt a new opinion. His hope lay in this, that he came to declare the thing as it was,—that which was from the beginning, but which God was now making manifest, through the birth and death and resurrection of His Son, to Jew and Greek, to Barbarian and Scythian, to bond and free. His hope was in this, that His truth was manifesting itself in the consciences of men, that he was awakening them to know, as he had been awakened himself to know, that the Son of God was shining into their hearts with a brightness above the brightness of the sun,—that they were kicking against the pricks, when they were refusing to acknowledge the crucified Jesus as the Lord of their hearts. Wherever he went, he

had proofs that God had other ways than by the leading of a star to manifest His only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; that in every nation and language there were tokens and witnesses of Him which God Himself was drawing forth, which His Minister was to learn first of the invisible Teacher in the secret ear, and then to proclaim upon the housetops.

III. And how is it now, brethren? Are things altogether changed? Have we, as some tell us we have, the Scriptures and the traditions of the Church, either separately or both together, as substitutes for that inner manifestation of the Son of God, which the Scriptures and the Church say came to certain wise men through the guiding of a star, and to the bulk of the nations through the preaching of the Gospel? The actual prayer of the Collect would be utterly inconsistent with the words which introduce it,—the desire for *us* could have no connection with the light which came to wise or foolish Gentiles in the old time, if *our* knowledge of God has not the same ground, is not essentially of the same nature with theirs. The Magians had their traditions, and paid them fitting reverence. They studied the stars in conformity to them. But if their traditions had been a thousand times better than they were, they would have said: "Trust God, and not us. He is with you. Follow His guiding." They acted on the conviction that this was their duty. They opened their hearts to God's teaching, and He manifested His Son to them.

He led them to the Child. Those to whom St. Paul preached were not merely Gentiles. A Jewish colony was mixed with them. He spoke to both equally. He made use of Gentile traditions and lore. He appealed continually to the Jewish Scriptures, and to the history of the Jewish calling, as authoritative and true. But in both cases equally his object was to lead them to faith in God, in the living Son of God, Who had spoken and was speaking to the Gentile conscience, Who had spoken and was speaking to the Jewish conscience, not less directly because He had given the Jews a Law, because He had raised up Patriarchs, Kings, Prophets, to rule them, teach them, reprove them; because He had caused His oracles to be collected and written down as testimonies of His continual presence with them. The Jew fancied that the Patriarchs, the Law, the Prophets, were substitutes for the voice that was speaking to the Gentiles. He put these and the written oracles, as well as the comments and traditions of the elders, between God and himself. Whilst therefore he prided himself on his superiority to the Gentiles, he in truth reduced himself to a lower level than theirs. He renounced the human privilege, of which he could not deprive them. He cut himself off, as far as he could, from the Divine light and the Divine manifestation, using his traditions, using God's Scriptures, to close the passage through which the light of Christ, the Only-begotten Son, was penetrating into his inner man. Therefore

is it that St. Paul had to complain so continually, "A veil is on their hearts." It is not taken away in the reading of the Old Testament, though that testifies everywhere of Christ. Only when they turn to the Lord, when they seek Him Who is seeking them, will it be taken away.

This example is so certainly meant for us and is so fearful, that there is need continually to press the truth which the Collect suggests. It is God, Who manifested His only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, Who does only, Who can only, manifest His Son to us. No book can do it, be it ever so divine; no Church authority or tradition can do it, be it ever so venerable. We must know, not the book, not the tradition, but *Him* by faith. We must trust Him as we trust a father; that is what the Divine book tells us to do, that is what the Church tells us to do, and its authority and its traditions belie their own origin, contradict themselves and become blasphemies, if they speak otherwise. If we believe in God habitually as a living Person, if we seek Him as a refuge from our own atheism, from our own idolatry, from that in us which is most utterly contrary to Him,—our self-will, our pride, our spite and malice,—we shall know Him, really, as one knows a friend, not by seeing Him with the eyes, not by getting reports of Him or traditions of Him from others, be those reports ever so trustworthy, be those traditions ever so reasonable and credible, but by experiencing His help,

by finding out how much better He is than we are, and yet how well He understands what we are, and cares for us. To exchange for this practical faith, which rests upon God Himself and His own manifestation of Himself in the Son of God and the Son of Man, a belief in the holy book, is to disobey all the warnings of that Book, to show that we do not know what is in it, that we prize it as a name or a watchword, not for that which it teaches. To exchange for this practical faith a belief in the Church,—a notion that the Church will tell us the right thing and will bring us to Heaven,—is to show that we do not know what it is to be members of a Church, or what a Church is good for; that we do not prize it because it leads us to the Rock on which it stands, to the God Who has called it out to be the witness of His revelation of Himself to mankind, of His redemption of mankind, but because we suppose it is ours, and that it gives us some privilege and glory which other men want. This is to exalt ourselves and to deny God.

IV. That is to say, we do not adopt the next clause of the Collect; "*We which know Thee now by faith.*" I have been obliged in some degree to anticipate these words, but they deserve a separate consideration. We were willing enough to limit ourselves by objects of sight. The world had a great many to offer us that were very beautiful, that deserved all admiration. But to rest in them was impossible. We overlooked them. If we came to them with a heart free and

open for joy, they met it and gave it food on which it could feast for a time; if it brought sorrow, they oftener took their colour from it than gave it a brighter one. And there was an inward aching, a craving of the spirit for that which was like itself, for that which was higher than itself, a craving for deliverance from itself, that all these fair images merely mocked. How delightful was it to escape from them to a friend, to a kinsman!—to find an object not of sight but of trust!—one who could exchange thoughts and feelings with us, who actually suffered and rejoiced, who was wiser and better than we! But the sympathy becomes exhausted, or there is a vacancy in the character which had seemed all satisfactory, or the wisdom perishes, or some jealousy tears the cord in twain. We need more than this: one altogether better than ourselves; one whose sympathy has no stint; one whose character has no flaw; one who will last the same for ever. We want a Son of Man. The Gospel that there is such a Son of Man, that He knows our conditions of birth, of poverty, of suffering and death, what has it not been to Europe for eighteen centuries! Who knows into what hovels the sound has penetrated, over what cradles and what coffins there has been an echo of it? If you suppose the sun's light and heat have only been felt by those who are acquainted with the right doctrine concerning the heavenly bodies, you may suppose also that Christ's power has been limited by men's acquaintance with the right doctrine concern-

ing His relation to the visible or invisible world. As the truest astronomy, by declaring what is the unchangeable law of the world, by showing how entirely independent it is of our conceptions and anticipations, refutes the one conclusion, the truest theology spurns with far greater indignation the other. The theology of St. Paul declares Christ to be the foundation that is laid for every man, not one that men by their faith or feelings can lay for themselves. The theology of St. John declares Christ to be the Light that lighteth every man, whether the Light is acknowledged or denied. The Church, in its Creeds, its Sacraments, and its prayers, proclaims the Incarnation and the Manifestation of the Son of God as good news to the world. She prefers to endure the charge of being assuming and dogmatical, than to earn for herself the credit of hesitation and modesty—by refusing to meet the demand of the human conscience and reason—by teaching men to fancy that truth is created by their trowings.

V. But Simeon did not speak *only* of "*a Light to lighten the Gentiles.*" He said there *was* "*a glory*" for the "*people Israel.*" The Collect does not only thank God for manifesting His Son. It asks that we, though Gentiles, may have the "*fruition of His glorious Godhead.*" These are equivalent expressions. We ask for the whole Church, for the whole Universe, what the Jew believed in for his countrymen.

He felt, and he had a right to feel, that the children of Abraham had been educated for something higher

than the sight of the most blessed Child, of the most perfect Man. All their discipline had been to teach them that they could only be satisfied when they awakened up after God's likeness, that to know Him was their great reward. In our efforts to convert them, we have, I should think, been far too inattentive to this consideration. We have not done justice to the feeling which has been working, however confusedly, in their minds, that there must be the revelation of a *divine* glory encircling their nation; that if no such glory is in reserve for it, it has existed for nothing. But if we have failed to meet the secret cravings with which God has inspired Jews, if this has been the cause why so few of them have cast in their lot with us, we have done equal wrong to ourselves and to the other nations of the earth through the same ignorance and misunderstanding. The fruition of the glorious Godhead is as needful for us as for them. Whenever we speak of glory, whenever we think of glory, however paltry our words about it, however low our conceptions of it may be, this unspeakable, inconceivable blessedness is lying behind them. Why else does the thought of glory so naturally, so inevitably associate itself with the thought of departure out of the world? Why is there something painful to us in calculating the petty rewards which we can bestow upon a man who has done any work of deliverance for his country? Why do we almost dread—eagerly as we may desire his return—

to hear the vulgar, formal phrases which are all we can devise, to commemorate the toils and sufferings that we think of with most gratitude and affection? Why is there somewhat calming and soothing in the sadness which follows a brave man to his grave in the very place where his work was done, just when it was done? Solon, we are told, thought those young men blessed above kings, who yoked themselves to the car of their priestess-mother, and when they had brought her to the temple where her services were due, fell asleep for weariness, and, since she had prayed that the Goddess would pour her best gift upon them, woke no more. Such a gift we may surely believe the God Whom we worship would bestow on those who have offered themselves as freely for our common mother. Here the hard fighter knows Him by faith. Whatever may be the nature or the weapons of his outward warfare, he must seek the Captain of his hosts amidst jungles, must watch for Him by the light of camp-fires. It is by his own weakness that he learns the everlasting Strength; by his sins, the perfect Righteousness; by the feebleness and uncertainty of the halo which plays about the head of the noblest of His servants, the substantial glory of which that is the reflection. After this life comes the fruition of His glory. The longing for selfish prizes has ceased; the earthly weakness of desiring to exchange faith for sense has been taken away. What remains is the vision of that Light which fills earth and heaven,

the revelation to the inward eye of the Godhead itself, as the eye of the spiritual body will by degrees become capable of taking in all the beauty and harmony of God's works.

Yes! there is in us all a deep sighing for Home, a longing which nothing but this beholding of God can satisfy. The more we know of the faiths of all the nations of the earth, the more we discover it. Even where the desire has been most perverted, it still exists. Buddha taught those who honour his name to crave for annihilation. Though few may understand his philosophy, hundreds of millions have been affected by his practical teaching. That dream of theirs seems to us monstrous at some—which are surely the best—moments of our lives. But how often has it seemed most natural, most desirable! To lose oneself, to forget, to be forgotten: who, after days and months of intense restlessness, may not have counted this the highest of all blessings which the soul can attain? As long as there is about us a floating image of a God of wrath, a God from Whose dominion we should be glad to escape, yet a God Who would fain curse us with immortality, we shall turn to this as a distant but not impossible hope. Terrible as it may be to us to part with all beautiful things that we have delighted in, with all energies, affections, memories, hopes, the conscience will count this a trifling sacrifice to be delivered from its own ever-increasing burden, from the presence of an irresistible enemy.

But when there comes to the conscience the revelation of a reconciled and reconciling God, of One Who has manifested His only-begotten Son bearing the burden which we could not bear, taking away the sin of the world, bequeathing peace, giving repentance, baptizing with the Spirit, all is changed. That which was sought in nothingness, is found in a Father. The death of self is the beginning of a new life, of affections, energies, memories, hopes. These have their fruition in God. These realize their glory when He is revealed. Therefore it is true, as it was of old, that the desire of nations is for a Christ, a Son of Man; but for a Christ, a Son of Man in Whom we may see the Father. Therefore it is true, as it was of old, that the star which shall guide the wise men from the East, be they Buddhists, Brahmins, Mahometans, will rest on the cradle where the young Child lies; but will rest there because that Child has come to manifest the glory of GOD. Therefore it is true, as it was of old, that the preachers of a Gospel to the Gentiles must go forth telling them that the Word Who is their Light, took flesh and dwelt on earth, and suffered the death of the Cross, and that they may be signed with the sign of His Cross; but it is because the Wisdom and Power of GOD were revealed at Calvary; it is because the assurance was given there that sinful and dying men shall hereafter behold the face of GOD, and that His Name shall be on their foreheads.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

January 17, 1858.

PSALM XLII. 2. (*Prayer-book Version.*)

"MY SOUL IS ATHIRST FOR GOD, YEA, EVEN FOR THE LIVING GOD: WHEN SHALL I COME TO APPEAR BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF GOD?"

IT has been often said that the Psalms are out of place in our common daily service. All are invited to take part in that service. Numbers come to Church, at least on Sundays, whose minds cannot be especially devout. Yet language is provided for their use which expressed the most fervent longings of the most devout men. Such language may meet, now and then, the aspirations of the private suppliant. Even he must often find the Psalms far above the measure of his thoughts, so high that he cannot attain to them. How, then, can we offer them month after month to an ordinary English congregation, as if they could possibly speak what it was feeling?

Complaints of this kind are never to be lightly dismissed. They indicate a sense of the sacredness of words, which we should honour in others and try by all means to cultivate in ourselves. No men

have so much need as clergymen to be reminded that they may become merely mechanical repeaters of sounds; that the most holy utterances may at last mean almost nothing to them. No men have so much need to rouse themselves, or should be more thankful for being roused, even by rough rebukes, out of a habit of mind which may pass into lethargy and death.

But if so, they at all events cannot draw a line round those who ought and who ought not to adopt the prayers and Psalms of holy men as their own. The boundary, fairly marked, might very often exclude them. A minister cannot dare to plead, "This or that man is very liable to use these expressions idly or irreverently; I am in no such peril." He knows that he is in the most extreme peril. He knows that, in judging another, he should be condemning himself. He may have positive proof that passages from the Sacred Book have quickened hearers for whom he might have been tempted to pronounce them unfit, when they have not touched him at all, or have touched him and left him cold.

Many, I have no doubt, will readily accept this statement as a proof that a caste or order cannot safely be trusted with the custody of the Divine Oracles, or with the determination of the persons who may claim them as the expression of their own feelings—and will say that the true distinction is the stronger and clearer for this admission. That distinc-

tion, they will say, is not between clergymen and laymen, but between those who believe and those who do not believe. To the one division, such passages as that I have taken for my text, will be profoundly significant. For the other, it will have no significance at all. What can they know of the thirst which the Psalmist speaks of? How can they care to come into the presence of the living God? Will they not wish to put Him at the greatest distance from them? Will they not thirst for some potion that may make them forget Him?

There is great force in these questions. And who will feel the force of them? Do those persons who call themselves believers not understand what that unwillingness to think of God, what that estrangement from Him, is, which they describe so vividly? Are they only reporting what they have seen in other persons, not what they have been conscious of in themselves? Did the consciousness belong to another stage of their existence? Are they not liable to the continued repetition of it? Do they mean then to say that the feeling after God, the thirst for Him, may not co-exist with another feeling of exactly the opposite kind? When they speak of a conflict within them, do not they intend to affirm that those deadly enemies are dwelling very near to each other? Do they give themselves credit for anything but being aware of the strife, and knowing where the strength is which may make the better

side victorious? If they are calling themselves believers upon some other ground, in some other sense than this, I should wholly dispute the claim which they put forward to be in sympathy with those who trusted in God and thirsted for Him in other days. I should fancy there were none who would drink into the spirit of David's Psalms so little as they.

But if this is the nature and character of their belief, then I do not see how they can possibly exclude any from participation in these prayers and hymns; how they can find fault with the Church for adopting them into her worship, and giving them, with the most utter indiscrimination, to all her children. It is not merely that we do not know whether our next neighbour may not find something in them which we do not find, whether they may not be expressing more to him than they are expressing to us. It is not merely our ignorance which is the excuse for our not venturing to decide who shall or who shall not find the Singer of Israel as his spokesman. It is the discovery we have made why and when he refuses to be our spokesman. In so far as we are occupied with special interests; in so far as we are wrapped up in our special feelings; in so far as we disdain fellowship with that which is common to us and the other members of our kind; in so far the Psalms are written for us in an unintelligible dialect, we cannot enter into them, and they will not enter into us. It is when the minister confesses his

union with his congregation; when the members of the congregation feel that they have relations with each other; it is then that David's harp gives out its music, and we in this distant land and age can accompany it. No doubt it has been the charm of those who are in closets or on sick-beds; but for this reason, that they are longing there for fellowship with the Church of God; that they want an expression not of their solitary, but of their united, human thoughts. The Psalms, like the historical and prophetical books, may be Jewish, may be national to the very core. But if that nation was set apart from all others that it might realize the common wants of human beings, that it might exhibit the common tendencies of human beings; if it fulfilled that function all the more because it was not artistic like the Greek, or conquering like the Roman,—because it wanted the qualities which raised them above other people,—those who were most Jewish may also show us best what we are as men. Certainly they would not show us Englishmen what we are as men, if they gave us no type of those national feelings, the loss of which would be the loss of all our manhood.

I have said that this might be so. We have most certain proofs that it is so. Divines and philologers may dispute till they are weary about the origin of the Psalms, or of any other part of the Bible; they may call each other heretics and bigots as long as they find it healthy and profitable for their minds

to bandy such epithets. But the book established itself into a human book before the questions about which they are disputing were raised. It will remain a human book whichever way those questions are settled. By all means let those who have leisure fight them out. There are other questions which human beings must fight out, and in which they will get what aid they can from philologers and divines, if they have aid to give; from the cries and yearnings of these old kings and warriors, if those allies should fail them. *Their* help is given certainly under strange conditions. There is no stipulation that the man who receives it shall be in a comfortable, harmonious, satisfied state of mind. He is not called to make out his claim as a believer. Often it seems as if unbelief were to be his main characteristic. He need not be walking on firm ground; he may be in deep mire, where no ground is. He need not be able to make it evident to the world that he has a God, and that they have none; he may be surrounded by those who think they have assurances of the Divine favour, and who are asking him, Where is now thy God? To such people, so cast down, so disquieted within them, the old Psalmist stretches out a hand. Their sorrows and necessities he understands. He is used to the misery in which he finds them; he is used also to all the more ordinary forms of misery, poverty, sickness, the vigour of enemies, the neglect and desertion of friends. He does not expect to find

men bearing up under these calamities as if they were nothing. He knows them to be real. He affects no indifference to them. He does not the least pretend that what hurts his body and his outward estate, does not reach to his mind or his soul. He wishes, coward as he is, that he had the wings of a dove, that he might fly away and be at rest. He finds that he has been foolish and ignorant, a very beast before God, prizing outward felicity above that which is substantial and abiding. He does not conceal this or any confusion into which he has fallen. He cares only to show that there is a way out of confusions into clearness, for all that will put their trust in God.

I. When he says, in this Forty-second Psalm, "*My soul is athirst,*" he certainly describes no rare or peculiar state of feeling. The thirst of the soul is as generic as the thirst of the body. All men have it, because they are men. The cravings of human beings no doubt take innumerable directions. There is the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for wealth, the thirst for distinction. But we are so certain that men's desires have a common object, however much they may be distinguished and may seem to be opposed, that we rather submit to the use of a peculiarly vague, indefinite, unsatisfactory name, than not find some way of indicating this object. We say that all men pursue *happiness*. We do not well know what we mean or what they mean. We have to resolve our

generalization again into particulars, before we can make ourselves intelligible. Nevertheless we must retain the word till we can get some equivalent for it, an equivalent which will not fit a few men or a certain class of men, but the race.

II. The Psalmist said, "*My soul is athirst for God.*" He knew that all men in the nations round him were pursuing gods. Pleasure was a god, wealth was a god, fame was a god. It was impossible for living souls to follow after abstract notions. Everything which man pursued embodied itself; it must be contemplated as a reality, not as a fancy of the mind, or there could be no ardour in hunting after it. Therefore, as these gods began to fade away into certain notions of the mind, as men began to suspect that they had called the objects of their worship into existence, not only the worship became insincere, but the worshiper became cold and lifeless in the ordinary work to which he had devoted himself. He became the slave of his own schemes or imaginations. He must follow them whithersoever they led him, but there was no choice or affection in his service of them. He had no hope of their bringing him to any result. His heart testified that they were finite, and that he was thirsting for the infinite. And the infinite seemed a mere impersonal, dreary void. If he was to dwell in it, all forms and feelings must be abandoned.

Just what the Jew had been taught was, that the Lord his God was one Lord. He was not to pursue

a god of pleasure, a god of wealth, a God of fame. He was not to worship any work of his own hands, any conception of his own mind. He was made in the image of *the* God. *The* God was not far from him. He was about his path and about his bed, ordering all his ways. He was personal; yet He was infinite. He was an actual Ruler, an actual Judge; but His Majesty was not visible, He did not judge after the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears. He had a Name which men were not to take in vain; but He was not in the likeness of anything in the Heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. How often, then, did it seem as if there were no such Being! With what effect, with what bitterness, might the worshipers of definite idols say to the Israelite, "*Where is thy God?*" What answer could he make? To what place could he point, and say, "He is there"? If he said, "It is with the mind I behold Him, and not with the eye," how often would his conscience tremble as he made that profession, how often would the mocking fiend say, "And dost thou really behold Him with thy mind? Does He present Himself to that, as these outward forms do to the senses?" What, I ask again, could he say? This Psalm tells you what he said. "*My tears have been my meat day and night, while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God? Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself. For I went with the multitude and brought them forth into the house of*

God, in the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among such as keep holyday." He does not pretend that he is not disturbed by these taunts. He does not say that his mind is all clear and bright. He recurs to old times and experiences. But he is quite aware that they do not restore to him what he has lost, that they do not assure him of a *present* God. All he can do is, to ask that if He is, He will reveal Himself. And that he does ask courageously. "*I will say unto the God of my strength, Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why go I thus heavily, while the enemy oppresseth me?*" And then he was able to say to his vexed soul, "*O put thy trust in God, for I will yet thank Him, which is the help of my countenance and my God.*"

What a baptism of fire was this! What a plunge into atheism, that he might know God! What a loss of all the privileges of an Israelite, that he might find the ground upon which Israel was standing! For thus he learnt that the thirst for God is the thirst of man. The thirst for happiness means this, ends in this. The thirst for those particular finite things which try to sum themselves up in the thirst for happiness, have here their true centre, their final explanation. The holy day and the solemn assembly testified of this God. In the absence of all holy days and all solemn assemblies, He offers Himself to the solitary despairing seeker, as the foundation of all human fellowship, as *the* Being without Whom all things, all thoughts, must be scattered and endless.

The thirst of *his* soul could not be satisfied with any thing but Him, Who both kindles and satisfies the thirst of all human souls.

III. The Psalmist goes on, "*Even for the living God.*" It is no idle addition to the former words. The gods which the Israelite had been taught that he was not to worship, were dead gods; "*eyes had they, but they saw not; hands, but they handled not; feet, but they walked not.*" The complaint of them was, not that they performed the acts of men, but that they were unable to perform those acts. They seemed to have the organs of sense, but they had no use of the senses. Those who bowed to them had imputed to them their own gifts and faculties, but could not impart any gifts and faculties. There is a thirst of the soul to create something in its own likeness; but the first and deepest thirst is, to find in what likeness it is itself created; whence all its living powers are derived; who has fixed their ends; who can direct them to their ends. It is this thirst by which the Psalmist is now possessed. He has been told of a living God. Priests, lawgivers, warriors, have all turned to the God of their fathers as the God of life. It is in vain to tell him of a Being Who is not this. It is in vain to remind him of congregations, holy days, forms of worship, sacrifices, if they are not directed to such a Being, if they have not Him for their Author, if they are not the continual witnesses of His presence. They too, he has found, may become dead things. They may be-

come mere portions of a religion, of an idolatry. And then they cannot quench, in the very least degree, his thirst. They hold out the cup of water to him, and then withdraw it. They promise a divine manifestation, and tell the worshiper that no such manifestation is intended for him; perhaps, that they are to preserve him from beholding it and being consumed by it.

Here, too, the Psalmist is, in the strictest sense, the man. The heart and flesh of all human beings, whether they know it or not, are crying out for the living God. And they do give a thousand indications everywhere, that they cannot be contented with dead gods, or with any religious notions and forms which try to put themselves in the place of a living God. Viewed in this light, the phenomena of what are called *sceptical ages* are almost as startling evidences of the truth of the Bible, as they are of the falsehood of some who have professed to believe in it. Those ages are protests against the substitution of death for life; solemn declarations, coming out of the deepest heart of humanity, that shadows are not substances, and that unless there is a substance answering to the shadow, that must fade away. "*My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God;*" this cry might be heard, a deeper undertone, in the midst of those cries for the destruction of all that bore the name of religion and God in the last century. If it had not been so,—if God had not purposed to answer

that cry as men could not answer it,—I believe He would not have permitted any of those destructive processes to take effect. We may be confident that He will answer it at last, if any still more sweeping ruin should be ordained for our own times.

IV. Finally, the Psalmist says, "*When shall I come to appear before God?*" A bold petition! ought he not rather to have prayed, "O God, prepare me for the day when I must appear before Thee?" That is the modification which we who live under the New Testament generally give to words, which those who lived before the Incarnation and Epiphany of Jesus Christ could utter in simple fulness. Let us not fancy that they had a feebler sense of the necessity of preparation for meeting God than we have. What they believed was, that they could not prepare themselves for what assuredly would come to pass, that God Himself was preparing them. What they held was, that He prepared them for His appearing by teaching them to hope for it. If they did not expect it, did not hope for it, they would be startled and confounded by it; if they did, every step in their history, every struggle, every joy was an education for it. The Psalm we have been considering records one of the most severe passages in this education. A certain man, probably by the absence of all the tokens and witnesses of his country's faith, probably by the presence of the symbols of idolatry, perhaps by poverty or sickness which made the outward world

look gloomy to him, certainly by a terrible darkness and doubt in his inner self, is led to discover what he needed and could not be without; what must be, though all things in earth and heaven were to be shaken and to perish. He found a living God beneath all things, beneath himself. He had felt that the loss of Him was the fulness of misery. He was sure that His presence would be the fulness of joy.

Here too, I think, his experience was human, not solitary. He learned in himself how God was training multitudes besides himself. May we not believe, brethren, that that training is for our time as well as his; that Englishmen as well as Jews are subject to it? We often hear the epithet "heathenish" affixed to great masses of our population. Of late very vigorous efforts have been commenced, in London especially, for the purpose of bringing these masses to hear sermons, and to take part in Christian services. Our churches and chapels, it is said, have been regarded as belonging to the upper or middling class of society; the humblest class has felt itself excluded from them. Numbers, it is further said, from this and other causes, have become not passively ignorant, but actively infidel. Religious men, clergymen especially, are urged to remove the first scandal, by addressing themselves directly to the poor, and by opening buildings, sacred or secular, especially for their spiritual instruction. We are called upon to combat their objections to the authority of the Scriptures, and,

if they should reach so far, to the existence of a God, with arguments old or new.

I have no doubt that the acts of mercy to which I have alluded will ultimately bless even more those who give than those who take. The blessing perhaps may come in a way that we do not expect. We may find, to our shame, that the name "heathenish" is not exclusively, or even most appropriately, to be conferred on those whom we have not had the opportunity of instructing. Heathenish does not mean irreligious; Heathens, in old times and now, have made religion a principal occupation of their lives. It means, idolatrous religion; the worship of visible, or false or evil gods, the direction of the soul's thirst to unworthy or unreal objects. The impulse to this Heathenism lies in us all; who shall say that he has not yielded to it? who shall say that he has found the habits and maxims of an artificial society —those habits and maxims by which one class is distinguished from another—any adequate protection against it? Who shall say that the Goddess of Pleasure is worshiped in St. Giles's more than in Belgravia; the God of Money more in cellars and garrets than on the Exchange; the God of Fame more among those who can only hope to die in the ranks than among the members of professions, legal, military, ecclesiastical? If the Jew, under the name of Jehovah, worshiped Remphan and Moloch, who shall deny that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ is often clothed with the attributes of these divinities by those who kneel in churches and profess to pray in His name? No; Heathenism is not the title with which to stamp a class. The more earnestly we seek to rid others of it, the more shall we know what need we have to ask the God of our Salvation that He would set us free from it.

On the other hand, we shall find, I think, that a thirst for God, even for the living God, may be dwelling very deep in the hearts of those, not only who are without what we call religious instruction and information, but who have turned from it with disgust, and have become nominally—nay, in one sense really—atheists. God's education of suffering—we must repeat this commonplace to ourselves continually, for we are continually forgetting it—is a preparation for His Gospel which is like no other; it does sweep away trust in a great many gods whom comfortable men make for themselves, or accept by tradition from their fathers; it does testify that the God Who reveals Himself in suffering, Who meets men at a Cross, is the One they have need of and are thirsting for. The discovery that we have not simply and broadly enough presented such a Being to the faith of poor men; and that till we do that, the most elaborate machinery to awaken in them or keep alive in them what is called a "sense of religion," will utterly fail to raise them out of the degradation into which they have sunk,—this I think, will be one of our great re-

wards, if we engage with any sincere and deliberate purpose in these experiments to evangelize them.

And I am certain that we cannot meet the most resolute and passionate atheism by any method so effectual as this. How come such epithets as these, *resolute* and *passionate*, to associate themselves with that which seems so untenable and so cold as the denial of God? You know that it was so in the most earnest, the most enthusiastic, of Roman poets. The frightful thought of gods who were tyrannizing over the race of men, who were holding down all its aspirations and hopes, made him embrace a scheme of philosophy the most uncongenial to his ardent nature, because it promised him deliverance from their yoke. He could not bear dead gods, for his heart and flesh were crying out for a Living God. He could not bear cruel and false gods, for his soul was thirsting for a God of Love and Truth. It is not altogether different now. The notion has gone forth,—it has spread further and gone deeper than we like to confess,—that the upper and middle classes of society are upholding a system of belief which is not really and heartily their own, for the sake of preserving their ascendency over their inferiors. False as the suspicion may be, you will not remove it by producing a long array of evidences, to prove that your system rests on Divine authority. You will find that all these evidences play about the surface of the mind, that there is a suppressed premiss, a secret conviction within, which

they do not reach, and which would repel them, were they as logical and powerful as they often are incoherent and weak. Oh! why not say to the cities of England, as the prophets of old said to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God"? Why not answer the calumny that we worship a tyrant on the throne of heaven by saying: "This Jesus, the deliverer of captives, the opener of sight to the blind, the friend of the poor, is He in Whom we see the Father. For such a Being we know that there is an infinite thirst in your souls, because we have it in our own, and we are even such as you are?"

Yes, brethren, it must come to that; and mighty will be the recompense to the more easy and affluent members of society, if their exertions for those who are shut out from some of their advantages bring them to this conviction of a common nature and common necessities. I do not say that there is not a message to be carried to the poor, specially as poor. That message comes through the improvement of their dwellings, through all the efforts which you make that their existence may be less degrading, that they may not sink into a condition which makes a Gospel of God sound as a contradiction and an impossibility to them. Whatever you do of this kind, is surely as much a part of the manifestation of Christ to men as His own acts of healing when He was upon the earth were a part of it. But the good news concerning God Himself is only for *poor* men because

they are men. It is brought to them, because it has been and is still the means of enabling all of us to assert and to maintain our human dignity and rights. We forfeit that dignity, we lose those rights, when any accidents of position, any of the fruits of civilization, make us forget that we belong to a race which God has claimed as His offspring; that we are citizens of His kingdom; that we must have an infinite and unquenchable thirst, till it is satisfied out of the fulness of a Living God.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

January 24, 1858.

PSALM CVII. 14. (*Prayer-book Version.*)

"FOR HE BROUGHT THEM OUT OF DARKNESS, AND OUT OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH: AND BRAKE THEIR BONDS IN SUNDER."

I BELIEVE it is a common notion, sanctioned by divines, eagerly adopted by infidels, that the desire of Freedom which men are wont to cherish is discouraged in the Bible as secular and profane. The evil nature, we are often told, prompts us to cry out for Liberty; Subjection and Obedience are the watchwords of Christianity. There may be, it is said, a regulated Liberty which is compatible with Religion; but then it is Religion which imposes the regulations, not which awakens the cravings.

That there is a Religion of which this assertion is true no one will dispute: nor that it is a kind of religion which has been much in vogue among men; one which statesmen have asked for to keep the people in order; one which Churchmen have been able and willing to provide. But that it is the Religion—the Worship—which we read of in the Old and New

Testaments, I think a person who is disposed to take them in their simple, literal signification cannot affirm. How comes it that these words stand at the threshold of the Ten Commandments, the ground and sanction of them all, "I am the Lord thy God, Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"? How comes it that the sternest part of this record, that which most inculcates obedience, most warns of the consequences of disobedience, is the history of a national deliverance? How comes it that the readiness to endure slavery, the longing for the fleshpots of Egypt, is the very sin which the Divine Lawgiver denounces, the very one which all the Divine discipline, we are taught, is designed to cure? How comes it that captivity and slavery are the punishments, the ultimate punishments, which the Prophets warn their countrymen of, those which they hardly dare to contemplate? How comes it that the praise of God is always connected with some rescue out of a strange land; for the Lord's songs cannot, the Psalmist tells us, be sung there? How comes it that the word 'Redemption'—rather, the idea of which that word is the symbol—is the key-note of the New Dispensation as of the Old,—that the one fulfils the other because it contains the complete Redemption? Are all these tokens insufficient to show us that the Bible does not aspire to provide checks against the excesses of freedom, but to instruct us in the nature of freedom, to stimulate an appetite for it, to make

us ashamed of our contentment without it, to explain under what conditions we may obtain the highest measure of it?

It is easy to say, "Yes! the Bible speaks of a freedom, but not of that which men ordinarily pant for." It is easy to say this, and there is a ground for the saying. It is true that the Israelites coveted freedom while they were working under Pharaoh's taskmasters; it is true that they were ready to stone Moses when he brought them from under that yoke into the toils and perils of the wilderness. In other words, they desired they knew not what; when it was given them they shrank from it. So was it then; so has it always been; so will it be to the end of time. In this sense, the freedom which the Bible speaks of is not what men intend by freedom when they ask for it,—in this sense, but in no other. It is not true that the Bible palters with words in a double sense; that it appeals to a feeling which has worked mightily in men, only for the sake of substituting some other in the place of it. What men cry against when they are most fretful and impatient, that it encourages them to cry against, and promises that they shall be set free from; what they thirst after, when their thirst is strongest and least governable, that it promises to supply. If men will be in earnest,—if, in the words of a great orator, they will not rest while they have a link of the chain which galls them clanking to their legs,—God, so say the Scriptures, will bring them out of darkness and the

shadow of death, and break their bonds asunder. And as experience proves that this earnestness is not natural to men, that fitful irregular efforts, despondency, subserviency are natural to them, God, the Scripture teaches us further, does, by bitter suffering and by marvellous encouragements, kindle in us that which of itself would not be, keep that alive which left to itself would perish.

My brethren, if we would consider these things, and would believe that the words of the honestest book in the world are not cheating words, I think we should find all our lives much clearer and more real. We have often thought with ourselves, "If we could get into a certain posture of mind, we might perhaps sympathize with what we hear in churches. But it is a peculiar posture; we must have an apprehension of sin which we do not possess, and would not willingly counterfeit; we must have a sense of rebellion against a holy Law, of being exposed to the wrath of a holy Being; we must desire to please Him, to know Him, to be like Him. All this is well for those to whom it is given; there are characters of a certain complexion to which religion seems natural and necessary. By all means let them have it and enjoy it. But they tell us continually that we are cast in a different mould from them; that we cannot understand them, though they would give their lives that we should. Must we not, then, for the present at least, follow our bent as they follow theirs: not force

ourselves, as we would not force them, into a shape which was not made for us?" Such words are spoken, you know it well, sometimes openly, more often secretly. It is better when they are expressed, than when they are kept pent up in the heart; for when the conscience sees them fairly, it is ready with the answer to them.

What is that answer? The one which I have hinted at already. Granted, that there is in you none of that sense of personal evil which you have heard that you ought to experience; is there no sense of bands which you would wish to be quit of? It signifies little what these bands are called in the vocabularies of theologians and philosophers. Whether the oppressors are sensual, intellectual, or spiritual, we need not settle; if we are oppressed in our own selves, that is enough. For I am speaking of what is actual, not of what we read in books. Do not we hear men complaining continually that they cannot do what they would, or be what they would? They lay the fault on the tyranny of laws, or of governors who do not heed laws, upon custom, upon social rules and etiquette; upon the inveteracy of old maxims and habits; upon the fashions of the present day; upon chimeras and superstitions respecting the future. Each may shift the burden on a different place, but each feels it. Each must shift it upon something. Every one has good reasons for fixing upon that which he imagines to be the cause; yet

none can do justice to the indignation of his neighbour. "It is misplaced," he says. "If men only knew what he knows, how they would direct all their energies against the real grievance; with what a unanimous effort they would redress it! But he cannot do it alone; he must bring the world to his mind." Here is a confession that, whatever the evil be, the mind of man is in some way the ultimate cause of its not being removed; it must lie very near to that, be its home where it may. The Bible, I think you will find, is not as unjust to our different apprehensions respecting its nature, as we are to one another; it justifies us all. Evil laws, abuse of law, bad customs, the rules of society, are all admitted to be links in the chain by which we are held fast; the liberty promised has respect to all these. And the tacit acknowledgment, that after all it is in ourselves that we must be slaves or free; that no outward yoke could crush us if we had not put it on; that if we would cast it off, we could,—this acknowledgment, which is made unawares by those who in their theories most avoid it, is sanctioned and repeated in every page of Scripture, nay, is the expression of its deepest principle. For when we confess, in any terms, that the will is at the root of the tyranny we are groaning under, we stumble upon that doctrine which we found so offensive. We say that circumstances do not make our fetters, but that Sin makes them; that circumstances become the servants of Sin, and do its work, because we are its ser-

vants, and are doing its work; we do feel this sin, though we may not have understood the language in which some people express their feelings respecting it. But there can be no greater cruelty than to lead a man to this discovery, if you can lead him no further; doing so, you make him desperate; you take away those dreams of emancipation which he had, while he felt that his tyrants were on the outside of him; you tell him that freedom is meant for him, and can never be reached. To this condition must a man come at length, who has learnt the deep precious truth that

"It is the will
Alone which chains us to permitted ill,"

and has not learnt that there is One Who is seeking to set the will free; One above man; One Who sympathizes with men; One Who is working in man to will and to do of His good pleasure.

If, then, brethren, the sigh for pardon has not yet risen out of our hearts, that sigh may yet be working in another form,—*apparently*, not really another. We may cry for an *Absolver*, for one who will set us free from the bonds of those sins which by our frailty we have committed. The voice of God, be sure, is not monotonous; it does not speak in one accent only, and that one measured and adapted and reduced by human art. If there be spirits which respond at once to the accusation of having violated a righteous law, and others which are quickly touched by the sense

of having grieved a loving and gracious Father and Friend, there are those, less sensitive perhaps,—of sterner, colder stuff,—which nevertheless are conscious of a weight often too hard to bear. They do not like to give it a religious name; and whether it is pride or honesty, or both, which causes the reluctance, I would not disturb it, if only they will take care that the choice of a name does not hide the fact from them, or give it a false colour. Whatever a man's perplexity is, whatever it be which makes his actions irregular, his thoughts unquiet, his life contradictory, that is a band which needs to be broken for him, and which, after infinite fretting, he will find that he cannot break for himself, not if he has all the machinery of nature and art to help out his individual weakness. He must turn to the Lord of his will, to One Who can meet him there, in a region which the vulture's eye has not seen. He must say, "In this region of darkness and the shadow of death I cannot see my way. The world without I may know something of, though not much; but here, in the depths of my own being, I am lost. Here, where I most need peace, I find the sources of my disturbance; here, whither I fly for freedom from the slavery of the world around, I find a dungeon-keep. But I am sure there is Light here, if I could see it. I am sure it might shine in, and turn this prison-house into a kingly palace. Source of Light, do Thou enlighten me! Mighty Deliverer, do

Thou absolve me!"—Such voices have gone up from men in all places and conditions, and the answer has come. They have found that it had been given long ago, and yet that it came forth all fresh and mighty. For their bands have been broken asunder. They have known assuredly that the words of God are true words, purified seven times in the fire. They have been certain that Christ came to set free the imprisoned spirit of man; that He is nigh to that spirit now; that it may trust in Him; that it may prove day by day the truth of His own words, "If the Son shall make you free, then are ye free indeed."

If, in these last sentences, I have spoken of that mysterious region wherein lie the roots of all our thoughts, feelings, purposes, acts, do not think that I am therefore withdrawing you from the region of homely practical existence. No! brethren, it is in the common hard warfare of daily life that one becomes conversant with these secrets; in it one learns all the metaphysics that are worth knowing. In trying to do right, as husbands, brothers, fathers, citizens, we find the bands which hold us; the disappointments we meet with in our efforts to encounter the most ordinary temptations and provocations, to do the duty that lies nearest to us; the difficulty of being honest and truthful, still more, of being trustful and loving. Thus are we taught that we want an ever-present helper and deliverer, a daily absolution, a renewal of strength hour by hour. This shows us, too, what kind of absolu-

tion we require. It is the Son Who makes us free, because He brings us the adoption of sons. It is the faith, that in Him these spirits of ours may claim God for their Father, because He has in Him claimed them for His sons and given them His Spirit, that they may cry, "Abba, Father,"—it is this faith which raises us above the flesh that has claimed to be our master, when it was meant to be our slave; above that world, of which we were intended to offer the fruits to God, but which has demanded our worship for itself; above that Spirit of Evil, which would persuade us that there cannot be Freedom in the Service of a Loving God, and if we listen to him would make us the slaves of self-will and hatred. We are, therefore, driven back continually upon our Baptism; we have to learn our child's Catechism afresh every day. The wonderful lessons we learnt in it, are what God has made us to be, what we make ourselves to be when we forget Him, what His Name is, and what strength and deliverance lies in it for ourselves and all our brethren; how in the power of it we can keep His commandments, loving Him with our hearts and souls and strength, loving our neighbour as ourselves; how we and they may pray to Him as members of one body, saying, "Our Father;" how He answers that prayer, first adopting us as His children, then feeding us as His children with the flesh and blood of His Son; how, in the faith of the reconciliation which that flesh and blood express to us, we can offer

ourselves as living sacrifices to God,—this wonderful child-lore, brethren, contains the whole secret of that deliverance, which we need in our manhood as in our infancy; oh that, one and all, we may claim it! All that we have ever dreamed of, when our thoughts of the liberty which is possible for humanity were the most glowing; all that sages and saints saw, sometimes afar off, sometimes almost at hand; all that tempted the embrace of longing hearts, and then has fled away and seemed to be only a phantom;—all this is expressed in this teaching, and with it the resolution of the problems of actual life; the escape from woes without, and more fearful woes within; the absolution from the anguish of past guilt, and present helplessness, and the terrors of the future. Let us wait for no change of circumstances, for no new experiences, no fresh revelation. Our circumstances will be a growing bondage unless we seek the Divine freedom; our experiences have been more than enough to tell us all that we cannot live without it; the revelation of God's Love, which we have already, is warrant for the conviction that it is near all who desire it, that He is awakening the desire for it.

These meditations on the subject of Freedom are not, I think, quite unnecessary at this time. Whenever wild and wicked acts are done in that name, it loses some of its power over timid minds: they are easily tempted to suppose that it is not quite one

which religious men should meddle with. The old and obvious suggestion, that religion has been used to justify plots and assassinations as much as freedom, that if you cast away one upon that plea you must cast away both, has little weight with those who live in the moment, and regard history as only an almanac of events that can never recur. And no doubt it would be a mere idle taunt to observe that crimes, which are imputed to the enemies of Popes in our days, have been smiled at and sanctioned by Popes themselves in other days, if it were not needful for our own instruction and warning to remark, that those who would make the Gospel of Christ not a Gospel of Freedom, are doing what in them lies to make both Freedom and Religion criminal and ungodly, and are therefore encouraging the atrocities which are done under either pretext. This consideration should not be quite lost on those who, out of mere wantonness and love of paradox, or a dislike of certain persons and professions, speak lightly and scornfully of a word which no Englishman can in his heart despise, till he has become a traitor to all the memories and traditions of his country,—yes, and a traitor to its Faith also. For faith in a God Who breaks men's bonds asunder has been the faith of our forefathers, the faith to which we have owed everything that is pure and great amongst us. It is the faith which has given us all our manliness; it has been equally the faith which has given us noble women, capable of

showing forth, even under the most enervating and depressing circumstances, a divine strength and heroism. It must not be forgotten that those Sovereigns who brought back to our soil, from the lands in which they had wandered, an impatience of Freedom, a desire for Absolutism, a belief that Absolutism and Religion are natural allies, brought with them also irreverence for women, an accursed heartlessness, a detestable licentiousness. That the infection which they left in the English Court has been in our days thoroughly removed, that domestic purity has established itself there,—this renovation, as it has been the great impulse to loyalty among the people of England, so is it the best pledge that the sons and daughters of our Queen, whithersoever they shall go, will testify, by their words and their lives, how blessed and glorious a thing it is to be born on a free soil. We have a right to believe confidently that she who is leaving us now—since simplicity is stronger than guile, old affections than plausible theories—will never be tempted, by any sophistries, however they may clothe themselves with religious names, by any dread of revolutions and anarchy, be it never so reasonable, to think that a Government can merit the titles of patriarchal and divine by bringing its subjects into bondage, and not by raising them to freedom. May the happy omen of her marriage upon the day on which we commemorate St. Paul's conversion, continually remind her that the noblest champion

for Christ was he who bade men stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free! May all the blessings of which that day speaks be hers! May they be ours, that so we may be God's ministers, as St. Paul was, in bringing the nations that we rule, and by degrees all the nations, out of darkness and the shadow of death, and in breaking their bonds asunder!

Septuagesima Sunday.

January 31, 1858.

EPHESIANS v. 13, 14.

"BUT ALL THINGS THAT ARE REPROVED ARE MADE MANIFEST BY THE LIGHT: FOR WHATSOEVER DOTH MAKE MANIFEST IS LIGHT. WHEREFORE HE SAITH, AWAKE, THOU THAT SLEEPEST, AND ARISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT."

IN the Gospels for the Sundays between the Epiphany and this Septuagesima, the Church sets forth before us different acts of our Lord by which He manifested His glory to the minds of His own countrymen.

They *saw* nothing but a poor Man, not distinguished by any outward token from those who surrounded Him. The halo of glory with which painters are wont to encircle His head, has indeed a true meaning. It imports that perfect inward beauty must in some way make itself felt through all obstructions. But no one supposes that this is more than a symbol, of which the imperfection of human art is obliged to avail itself. We cannot help believing that the countenance was perfectly beautiful and harmonious, which was distorted by no restless appetite or discontent.

We may cheerfully admit that the sorrow deepened, instead of impairing, its submission and its trustfulness. Still the expression of the face, as much as any other manifestation of character and power, demands a mind and not an eye to recognize it. The principle therefore is universal. Every revelation of Christ, even when He was present to the sight, was addressed to something else than to that.

If so, the thought naturally arises within us, how few there must have been who received any effect from all the acts of grace and power which they witnessed! If we believe the acts of power to have been real, we acknowledge of course that lepers were actually cleansed, that lame men actually walked. But when one considers these as discoveries of a Divine power and goodness, not merely as producing certain sensible effects, we are tempted to ask, "To whom, then, were the discoveries made? Were not ninety-nine out of a hundred of those who profited by them, as well as of the bystanders, just what they would have been had nothing of the kind passed before them? A light was there. Was there any illumination in them which corresponded to it, and proved that it was there?"

The words of St. Paul in the text, taken in their simplest, broadest signification, would seem to affirm that there must have been. He declares generally, that all things, being reproved, are made manifest by the light. He must surely mean, that wherever there

is light it will make its power felt; there will be a discovery and manifestation of it; it will discover things previously hidden. In the next clause he as distinctly asserts the converse of this proposition. Wherever there is manifestation, wherever anything previously hidden is brought out, there must be light. In the third clause he assumes a fact which may seem at variance with these statements, but which really, I think, explains and confirms them; that it is possible for a man to be asleep, even to be dead, while the light is shining in upon him, though the light is in One and comes from One Who bids him, and can enable him, to awake from sleep, to arise from the dead.

The words were of course addressed to persons not in the condition of those Jews who were witnesses of our Lord's signs and wonders. They came from one who was preaching, in a city far away from Jerusalem, the news of His resurrection. Yet they must be true respecting the former, if they are true respecting the latter. We shall not understand their application to the Gentiles of Ephesus, if we do not understand them with reference to the Jews of Palestine. I venture to affirm, respecting each one of those who witnessed the works of Christ at Nazareth or Capernaum, respecting those who sat with Him in the ship on the Lake of Gennesareth, respecting those who met Him and discoursed with Him at the Feasts in Jerusalem, respecting Scribes

and Pharisees, respecting publicans and sinners, respecting the eleven Disciples and the one who betrayed Him, that the light did make itself manifest, not to their eyes only, but to the mind within them; that the things which were there were discovered and reproved by it, that they felt and knew assuredly that a light had come into the world, and had come to them.

I. I take these cases in the order in which I have spoken of them. We may be inclined to think that, whoever else were conscious of a Divine power manifesting itself to them in the person of the Son of Man, the Pharisees at all events were entirely without that consciousness, or that it was suffocated by their pride and self-glorification. On them, we are wont to say, that the signs and wonders were utterly lost. Did we follow the Evangelists more strictly, we should rather be disposed to say, that there were no men who gave more unequivocal proofs that every act and word had gone home to them, that it had come with the penetrating force of light, that it had detected secrets in them of which previously they had been utterly ignorant. All their anger and bitterness was a demonstration of this fact. There was nothing in His outward acts that was specially offensive to them. They saw very little which, even upon their maxims, they could find fault with. He had not told the multitude that they were unworthy of their respect. It was only in the latter days of His

ministry that He began directly to denounce them as hypocrites. It was that which was in Himself, that which came forth through His acts, that which the eye and ear could take no account of, that tormented them and drove them to madness. He discovered them to themselves before He exposed them to any of those who had been used to account them models of righteousness. They felt that an actual Righteousness was before them, embodied in a Person, exhibited in deeds, which was not merely higher than theirs, but was the very reverse of theirs, springing from an altogether different root. Therefore the objections which they took against Him were only now and then directed against the accidents of His position; generally they struck at the very essence of His life. There was no doubt the staple objection, "He is a Galilean, and no prophet cometh out of Galilee." But the more deep and radical objections were also the more common: "This man blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only? He saith that God is His Father; making Himself equal with God. He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." These were not complaints against the genuineness of the powers which He was exercising. They were complaints of Him. They indicated dislike to His character. They were not, as He Himself declared, words spoken against the Son of Man, but words against the Holy Spirit which was in Him. "They have seen and hated," He said,

"both Me and My Father." They had that actual dislike of goodness as goodness, which is scarcely perhaps found in any men, except those who have been hardened by a religious profession, and which only comes forth in them when the light has broken into their hearts, and all the habitual falsehoods which have been cherished there, and which have been mistaken for qualities sacred and acceptable to God, have been laid bare as only One Who reads the heart and rules it can lay them bare. The sense of there being such an One near them, with them, Who desired to set them right, and by Whom they would not be set right, with a voice which they could not deny to be one of authority, One entitled to their homage, and Whose voice they therefore wished to stifle,—this was the provocation to all their enmity and all their crimes.

II. The same truth applies with equal force, though under a different aspect, to those Publicans to whom our Lord preached His Kingdom, and with whom He ate and drank. To some of them, no doubt, His garb of poverty may have been a recommendation. They may have preferred Him on that account to the Pharisees, who were rich, and to those who lived on the smiles of Herod. But many of them also were rich, and may have been courtiers as well as extortioners. Those who were so, would regard the Carpenter's Son with more suspicion and contempt even than those who had inherited their wealth. Or-

dinarily they would have counted it no condescension for such a person to mix with them; they might have thought they were honouring Him by receiving Him. But they did feel that He was stooping to them, because the dignity and glory of a King was manifested through His acts; because the same power which had drawn Levi from the receipt of custom, was acting upon them; because there was an awfulness in His goodness, which familiarity could not in the least diminish. And yet it seemed altogether natural and fitting that He should come amongst them. By doing so, He made them understand His kingly authority and grace as they could never have understood it otherwise. They perceived that the Highest of all is—and by the eternal law which He obeys and fulfils, must be—the servant of all. They perceived that the Most Righteous must sympathize most with the unrighteous, because it is His desire to make them like Himself, because He hates evil and therefore wishes to deliver them from it. These were manifestations to the inmost heart and conscience. Into some the light might have penetrated deeply. It may have only played upon the surface of the minds of others. But in all it will have produced some effect. It will have brought out desires, aspirations, hopes that had been crushed. It will have shown them how these had been crushed, how they had been holding down the truth in unrighteousness. It will have shown them that the light which reproved them

was not merely in dead letters and a law which condemned, but in a Person, Who could raise them out of death and give them life.

III. So again, in reference to the Apostles. St. John says, speaking of the Miracle at the Marriage-feast in Cana, "He manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him." He is evidently recording an impression which was made upon his own mind, and upon that of those who were with him at that time, an impression which had nothing to do with their senses, since there were few of our Lord's miracles which appealed less to the senses than this. As he tells us elsewhere, that when our Lord said, "I do always such things as please My Father," many believed on Him (though there was nothing in those special words which would affect His hearers more than thousands of words which came every day from His lips), so here also he makes us understand how a sudden conviction flashed into their hearts, that they were in the presence of Creative Power. Both expressions teach us, by their very simplicity, more the nature of belief than all the definitions of the schools ever did. It is just in this way that we do come to believe anything. The preparatory processes may be rapid or slow. We may pass from a state of vehement denial, or of indifference, or of anxious hesitation. But whenever faith comes, faith on whatsoever or on whomsoever it may be exercised, it comes in this way. There is an evidence, a manifestation to which we bow. We do not

adopt an opinion, but yield to a demonstration. In the Gospel narratives, we see how exceedingly difficult it was for the Disciples to confess the power which was acting around them and upon them, how puzzled they continually were, how oppressed by old notions, how ready to resolve everything which they felt into some outward or sensible influence. They had the greatest alternations of doubt and persuasion. But whenever the persuasion of their Master's divine nature did lay mighty hold upon any one of them, so that he could say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," it was clear that flesh and blood had not revealed it unto him, but the truth had been manifested to his spirit; that he had not arrived at it through any mere external authority, or any logical inferences. The very same light which had reproved the Pharisee for his falsehood, which had awakened the sense of truth and the hope of deliverance in the woman that was a sinner, had enabled the Apostle to preach the Kingdom of God to other men, by showing him that it was within him.

IV. But there was an Apostle who preached the Kingdom of God to others, and yet is called the son of perdition. Was there any such revelation or manifestation in him? Did not the light merely play around him, without ever being felt or confessed by his conscience and his heart? I believe we have a very poor and shallow conception of his guilt and our danger if we think so. All through his history and

his preaching, the light must have been reproving him, manifesting the true righteousness to him, manifesting his own sin to him. At that hour when he received the sop, there must have been such a manifestation of Love, of divine Love to his conscience, as it had never known before. But the opposing spirit of self-seeking, of malice, and of treachery, had been invited into his heart, and he had surrendered himself to it; and having received that sop, he went out, and it was night in him, as well as in the world.

V. If these things are so, my brethren, we can appreciate better the force of St. Paul's words, as addressed to those who had never known Christ after the flesh, but who had heard His Gospel. To them he could say boldly: "All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light. There is no person walking about in your streets who claims to be the Lord of nature and of man, who speaks to the winds and sea and they obey him, of whom the evil spirits say, 'Thou art the Son of God.' There is no such person speaking to you with bodily lips, sitting in a ship in the harbour of your city, preaching to those who are about to worship in the temple of your goddess. But there are thoughts within you all, Jews, Heathens, baptized men, that are accusing or else excusing one another. You are, one and all of you, reproved,—not by the civil magistrate, not by the ruler of the Synagogue, not by the presbyter or overseer of the Church, of secret things whereof they can take no cognizance,—of acts,

words, thoughts, feelings, states of mind, of which they have no guess, which they could understand very imperfectly, if you were able stammeringly and incoherently to confess them. Another eye than theirs is looking into these, another light than theirs is manifesting them to your own selves. For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Whenever you are thus reproved and called into judgment, be sure there is a Light with you and near you, and that it is the very same Light which stirred up the fury and wrath of the Pharisee; which led the Samaritan to say, 'He told me all things that ever I did;' which scattered the confusion and unbelief which dwelt in His chosen followers; which led Judas, when he could bear it no longer, and despaired of quenching it or of dwelling in it, to go and kill himself. It is not some other Light than that. It is the very same. It is the Light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."

VI. And therefore he could say with confidence, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Such words he could address,—he did address continually,—to the unbelievers of the Synagogue, and to the worshipers of Diana. He could have preached no Gospel to either, if he had not been permitted to tell them that the divine Light had been manifested; that the Word in Whom it dwelt had been made flesh; that He was claiming all men, of all nations, as children of the Light; that He had

power to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan, the Prince of Darkness, to the God in Whom is light and no darkness at all. But now St. Paul is not delivering his message to these. He is speaking to those who had been baptized into the name of Christ; who had claimed to be illuminated men, children of the Light; who were admitted into the Church of the firstborn, the Family which was named in the only-begotten Son. The language which was true for all men was true in the highest sense for them; they were witnesses to all men how true it was. Their profession solemnly declared that there is no light in any human being but what comes to him from Christ, the Head and Lord of Man; that He has brought His Light near to the hearts and consciences of all, that those hearts and consciences may entertain it and be penetrated by it, or may shut it out. If they supposed that their profession excused them from the necessity of coming to the Light and walking in it; if they supposed that there was not a darkness as well as a light in them, and that they were not in danger of losing themselves in it, they would soon be reproved by the Light; it would manifest to them evils which they had never supposed were in them, or which they supposed had been killed long before; it would show them how those evils were affecting their whole lives, their daily words and acts. And oh, how good it was for them that these painful, tormenting discoveries should be made to

them! It was the proof and sign that they had not been able to put out the light, though they had forgotten it; that Christ was indeed with them and manifesting Himself to them, however little they might heed His presence, or wish for it. And it was possible—all too probable—that their lazy, stupid trust in the mere name that they bore, in the fact of belonging to the Church, might at least draw them into a deep sleep, in which every faculty of their spirits would be benumbed, a sleep which would indeed be the sister of death, and might be the beginning of it. But there was a voice which those who were dead and in the graves would hear, a voice saying continually, "Awake, arise!" The moment that voice had awakened the least hearing, the least response, it would be felt to come from One to Whom they could confess their dulness, their incapacity for good, their inclination to evil, and Who could bring them back into the fellowship of that Light from which they had fled.

And, brethren, if these words were not as applicable to the nineteenth century as to the first, applicable to Englishmen as to Ephesians, applicable to all equally, applicable without the slightest modification of their sense, I do not see what a minister of Christ has to do, or how he can dare to speak to any congregation of persons, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. He may say to every human being: "That which reproves thee for any evil act thou hast ever committed, for any evil thought or habit thou

art cherishing, is Light. It is not light which comes to thee from the opinion of thy fellow-creatures. How often does it reprove thee for following that opinion! It is not light which comes to thee from some notions or maxims of right which thou hast picked up in the schools or in the world; how often does it show the feebleness and even falsehood of such maxims! It is Light which comes to thee from God Himself, from Him Who knows the secrets of thy spirit, from Him Who can converse directly with thy own self. It is the Light of which the light of the sun is but the outward and natural counterpart, the imperfect image. It is that Light which dwelt in Him Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His Person. It is that Light which shone forth in Christ's acts of power, which shone brightest in His humiliation and weakness and agony; which came forth in that hour in which the powers of Darkness seemed to be almighty; which proved itself victorious over the grave and hell. It is the Light which is gathered up in Him Who has ascended on high that He may fill all things, which He has been manifesting forth ever since, through men, to men, and in men; without which there would have been no Church, no nation, no family, no order among human beings; without which no evil would have been detected, no mischief redressed, which has been as much the source of all fertility and productiveness in the lives and societies of men, as the

visible light has been the cause of fertility and productiveness in the earth which they till." Yes! this Light and no other is that which causes the smart and sting of conscience, which recalls the bad deeds of days gone by, which makes us know what is degrading and defiling us now. This it is which makes every one ashamed of the fraud, the equivocation, the acted lie of which he has at first been proud, and which he thought had cozened his neighbour instead of destroying himself. This it is which makes us cry out loudly against the corruptions and abominations of the world, till one suspects that these corruptions and abominations are in oneself,—a suspicion which leads most to a shameful tolerance in others of that which they wish to be indulged in themselves; which leads a few to a greater indignation against the wrong, and a greater earnestness for its extirpation, because they know what it is, and what the cause of it is. And if this, dear brother, is the cause within thee, awake, arise! for that which doth make manifest is Light, and Christ shall give thee Light. Do not talk of the light in thy conscience. It is there, no doubt; but it is little help to believe in a conscience; for that will not reform thee, that will not bring thee out of thy miserable confusions. Believe that the light is Christ's; believe that it has come from Him into thy heart. Believe that He can give thee power to follow it, and walk in it, and love it. Believe that the light which visits thee in thy most secret hours is

the very Light which shall shine forth upon the whole universe one day. The Christ Who was manifested in Galilee and Jerusalem, to Pharisees, to Publicans, to Disciples,—the Christ Who was manifested to Ephesians, Corinthians, Romans,—Whom Paul preached, in Whom Gauls and Britons believed and were baptized, Who has manifested Himself to every suppliant sinner, to every self-righteous man, to every hypocrite in all ages since,—is the Christ Who shall be revealed in the day of God's final victory over all His enemies.

Sexagesima Sunday.

February 6, 1858.

LUKE XVIII. 1–8.

"AND HE SPAKE A PARABLE UNTO THEM TO THIS END, THAT MEN OUGHT ALWAYS TO PRAY, AND NOT TO FAINT; SAYING, THERE WAS IN A CITY A JUDGE, WHICH FEARED NOT GOD, NEITHER REGARDED MAN: AND THERE WAS A WIDOW IN THAT CITY; AND SHE CAME UNTO HIM, SAYING, AVENGE ME OF MINE ADVERSARY. AND HE WOULD NOT FOR A WHILE: BUT AFTERWARD HE SAID WITHIN HIMSELF, THOUGH I FEAR NOT GOD, NOR REGARD MAN; YET BECAUSE THIS WIDOW TROUBLETH ME, I WILL AVENGE HER, LEST BY HER CONTINUAL COMING SHE WEARY ME. AND THE LORD SAID, HEAR WHAT THE UNJUST JUDGE SAITH. AND SHALL NOT GOD AVENGE HIS OWN ELECT, WHICH CRY DAY AND NIGHT UNTO HIM, THOUGH HE BEAR LONG WITH THEM? I TELL YOU THAT HE WILL AVENGE THEM SPEEDILY."

"YES!" persons have sometimes said, and still oftener have thought, when they read this passage,—"Yes, if God were an unjust judge, we might weary Him with our petitions. But as we believe that He is altogether just and merciful, what need is there of such importunity? Does He not grant to all men liberally? Does He not send His rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous? What proof have you that His bounty

depends in any degree upon our solicitations? What evidence, except what is furnished by some records of fanatical experience, that our prayers are answered at all, in the common sense of the word, *answered?* And if not, what is there in this Parable, or in any other, which should encourage us to pray and not to faint, or should make us think that we may not fare as well if we never pray?"

Let us see whether the story of the Widow does not meet this difficulty, more than it seems to do when we merely look upon it as an instance of successful urgency.

I. Her petition was this: "*Avenge me of my adversary.*" She had, then, an enemy, a perplexing, tormenting, powerful one. By some means or other he was able to terrify or oppress her continually. This vexation or this fear was the cause of her going to the Judge. He did not want her to come to him. He had issued no command that she should do it. He would far rather that she had left him in peace. But she could not. The sense of her misery and hardship was too galling. If she had ever so little chance of being heard, she must try. There was a tribunal in the city. What kind of person occupied it was not the question. It spoke, by its very existence, of redress for wrong. It witnessed to her that she was not meant to be the victim of mere power. It told her that even she, a weak woman, might be avenged. Cry therefore she will, in the full sense that she was crying for right

against a tyrant, that she was crying to one whose business it was to help her. So long as that sign—if it had become but a sign—of protection, of punishment, of order, lasted, so long she could not despair. She might have much to bear, but the adversary would be put down at last.

This then was the secret of her importunity, this kept her hope alive; the sheer necessity of getting deliverance in some way from an actual disturber and destroyer of her peace. That you may feel it to be so, you must leave out for a time any other consideration. You must put the case as strongly as you can, so as to exclude, or almost to exclude, every motive or influence except this one. The Judge must be an unjust judge, one who fears not God nor regards man. He must give the help merely to rid himself of the petitioner. For thus our minds are fixed by the Parable upon this great truth: Each one of us also has an adversary. It is the goading of this adversary which drives us to prayer. We must pray, not because any ruling power in Earth or Heaven says, "Draw nigh," but because there is a pressure of evil around us, beneath us, upon us, which we must shake off if we can. It presents itself to some in one shape, to some in another, to some with immeasurably more conscious strength than to others. But all feel it, and therefore all pray. All cry to some power or other in Earth, or Heaven, or Hell, for rescue. All cry, even if they half, or more than half, believe that the God

Whom they are beseeching is an Unjust Judge, one who cares little or nothing for them, one who has a spite against them for the wrongs they have committed, one who heeds them not, or else desires their destruction. They think this; their miseries seem to confirm the impression. For whence do they come? Are they not divine messengers? May not the Judge himself be the adversary? Their miseries speak this language; that part of their misery which is sin speaks it most strongly, for that transfers its own quality to the Being who is worshiped. He must be dark, for we are. And yet, in spite of all these confusions, men must go on beseeching even such a Being, one who is coloured with all the mists and clouds of earth, to avenge them of their adversary. They still feel that he is a Judge, that it must be his function to exercise justice, that he cannot wish evil to be, or them to be destroyed by it. These feelings are contradictory, no doubt; it is a chief part of men's wretchedness that they are so; but the contradiction only makes the fact more remarkable. Even to their unjust gods have men prayed, do men pray, under the bitter and intense weight of their calamities. And these calamities would be immeasurably more intolerable if they did not. If they once came to think, "There is absolutely no help or deliverance, we must give over looking for it, thinking of it, wishing for it,"—a condition entirely animal would succeed to one that is

at least partly human. There does come an answer to even these petitions, for there is a seat above that of the unjust Judge whom they have made for themselves.

II. And now comes in the mighty argument of our Lord: "Men will cry even to an unjust Judge, because they have a tormenting adversary. Yes, and not cry in vain. Would you pray less because you have GOD to pray to, because it is a Father you are calling upon, because He has chosen you to be His children, because you know what His will is, because you know that He hates wrong, and seeks to rescue you from it, because He has encouraged, and invited, and commanded you to flee from it to Him? Do you think," Jesus says, "the deliverance came from the Unjust Judge on this very ground, that he *was* unjust? Do you think that you may not expect, with something more of confidence than the Widow had, to be avenged by God, even if He bear long with you?"

This, you see, is precisely the point from which we started. The doubt was, whether God's Righteousness and Mercy are reasons for prayer or against it. Now, I think, we are in a condition to solve this doubt thus: Reasons against it, if by prayer we mean seeking to convert the mind and will of God to ours. Reasons for it, if by prayer we mean the cry, "Avenge us of our adversaries. Deliver us from these powers which are crushing us to earth or hell, and separating us

from the Mercy and Justice and Truth which we believe dwell perfectly and absolutely in God, and constitute His nature." And this we shall find, I am satisfied, not a formal or artificial, but a thoroughly practical solution,—one which will account to us for most of the perplexities in which we feel ourselves involved when we approach the subject of Prayer, and of the answers we may expect to it. If we suppose that God enjoins prayer upon us as an arbitrary exercise, by which we may hope to attain certain rewards or to avert certain punishments hereafter, it cannot be wonderful that we should at times be led to ask ourselves, "What good comes to us from this? What pledges and tokens have we here of a bliss that is to result from it hereafter? Can it be meant, can it be necessary, that we should go on with this practice day after day, when each day it seems more unmeaning than the last?" Such thoughts are likely to arise, and I am sure do arise, in a great many minds. And then fine theories are produced, which show clearly why prayer should belong to the early stages of the world's history, and not to the later; why it was a very suitable and natural utterance for the lips of children, or for those periods when grown men were children; why it becomes obsolete with innumerable other practices, when we put on the manly dress, and the race is no longer under priestly tutelage; why it hurts our conception of the Divine character, and the Unity and Harmony of the world.

All such suggestions must and will be listened to, because they chime in with men's experience, and seem to provide an excuse for that which they had been ashamed of. There is a sense of the dryness, inefficacy, weariness of prayers, which assails most as they grow into years and into the use and custom of the world; they remember something different when they were children; they compare what they have heard of their forefathers with these feelings of their own. It is no doubt pleasant to think that the change is a sign of progress, a proof that we have outgrown habits which were made for another time. But then comes a sharp twinge of actual suffering, from without or from within. The man who had supposed prayer was for children or women, and not for him, finds that *he* has an adversary. He must say to some power or another, "Avenge me of this adversary." He must clutch at a prayer of some kind to some man or some god, to Fortune or to Fate. He finds it a natural, necessary, human utterance still. To suppress it may look like a great act of manliness, but it is an impossible one. The groan may be suppressed before bystanders, but it must be poured forth in secret. But to whom? Oh, brethren, this is the difference: the man has lost, not the necessity for prayer; that is stronger for him than for the child;—he has lost only the belief that there is One Who would care to hear him. He had reconciled himself to the world, with all its confusions and anomalies. He had for-

gotten, or ceased to believe, that there was any Judgment Throne in the midst of it; must not all his impressions be very strange, when he finds that he wants a refuge from an actual tormentor? Must he not doubt whether the tormentor may not be the God to Whom he would pray? Yes, out of the most advanced civilization, out of the philosophy which is the exponent of that civilization, there comes the very same question which haunted the mind of the savage. The man who has learnt to believe that evil and good are not radical opposites, only names for certain agreeable or disagreeable sensations; that the whole world is a mere machine, that he is a part of it, that he must take its irregularities for better, for worse, and that all notions of asking help of God to man are fantastic and infantine, has to pass again through the oldest experience of all, has to utter his shriek to an unknown being in earth or air; to a Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, who may mean good or evil to his creature, who may be just or unjust, may insist upon importunity or may despise it; but who, in spite of all the vagueness, fear, darkness, which surrounds him, must be invoked, for the adversary is at hand, and there must be a way of flying from him, though it be the most trackless region, even into a deeper abyss than has yet been sounded. What a revelation it is to hear some of the old childish lore again; to be told of a Father Who willeth not the death of His creatures, and Who has sent His Son into the

world, to release them from their adversaries, and to reconcile them to Himself; Who has sent His Spirit, that they may call him "Abba, Father!" and may draw nigh to Him as their everlasting Deliverer and Comforter and Friend! What a witness such words bear that they are meant for actual human beings, sufferers in an actual world, for men who do not know anything about abstractions, or who do know them to be cold, heartless, worthless, mere shadows cast from ourselves! What an escape for the reason, as well as the heart, from a philosophy which demands a more blind, implicit, impossible faith from its subjects than the most unprincipled priests ever demanded, the faith, namely, that the world is in harmony, that good and evil are only different notes of the harmony, when we feel and know that we are in the midst of discords, that we are only become insensible to them when we lose all perception of that which they contradict! Oh, the comfort of being told: "You have adversaries, and you are not to explain away your inward conscience and conviction that you have; you are not to crush your natural instinct to complain against them, to cry for vengeance against them. You are to gratify it, knowing that there is One Who is carrying on a perpetual war with these adversaries; the scheme of Whose government is a perpetual war with them; Who would have you take part with Him in that war; Who by the sense and experience of misery is drawing you to Himself, that in the very

midst of the struggle you may find peace, which is to be yours for ever."

Do you want to know whether there are any evidences that prayers are answered, except certain stories which are leavened with much superstition? See whether every cry, "Avenge me of my adversary," does not bring its answer,—does not bring with it a witness that there is a Judgment Throne, to which we may fly for the redress of our evils, and of the world's evil. See whether that answer is not worth more to you—is not of a more solid and certain kind—than the very most direct and peculiar of those answers about the verity of which you have doubted. See whether what offends your conscience in these reports is not mainly this, that they seem to speak of a partial Divinity, who is granting special indulgences to certain favourites, who departs from eternal laws for their sakes. If that is what they mean, I do not complain of any amount of indignation with which you regard them, or reject them. For your very rejection is a testimony that there ought to be a Being—that there must be a Being—Who hears all His creatures when they call upon Him; Who, because He upholds Eternal Laws, will give heed to all who cry against the violation of them. Assert such a Being against all who impugn or narrow His nature. Prove to your own inmost hearts, in the act and effort of prayer, that such a One verily is. But do not hastily condemn those who have perceived only that

aspect of Him which is turned towards themselves. Do not say that they are false or superstitious, because they think that He saved them individually from some calamity that had befallen them, or that might have befallen them. Why not? Are you not narrowing the idea of an all-seeing, all-loving Creator, if you suppose He cares for the universal and not for the particular, for the race, and not for the individual? Is that a kind of love,—a kind of wisdom,—which you would cultivate in yourselves, or admire in a fellow-man? Is it not a very dry, unreal, almost dishonest love? Is it not a vague, pompous, imaginary wisdom? And would you attribute to the Most High God that which you would count insincere, heartless, unfaithful, in a child of earth?

No! I dare not tell any man that he may not pray to the God of Life to oppose Death, in any form in which it may assail the creatures whom He has formed, and whom He watches ever. I dare not tell him that he may not call loudly to be avenged of some sickness which is crippling the energies of his body or his soul. I believe the sickness is sent him to awaken that cry. I believe the cry will certainly have an answer. The plague may not depart, the sufferer may go down to his grave with his pain unabated. But if that sickness has brought him into acquaintance and fellowship with One, of Whom he was ignorant before,—if he has found a Friend, an

Everlasting Friend,—I suspect he has a better answer than he ever expected. If he recovers, I would not preach to him that that was not an answer. I hold it to be so. God has given him that token, instead of some other, of His presence and His care;—that token, instead of some other, that He is asserting the unchangeable principles of His government, that He is fulfilling, and will fulfil, His glorious threat and promise, "O Death, I will be thy plague." Let the sufferer, in awe and humility, accept that decree from the Judgment Seat of the Universe; let him learn what is implied in it. That he may do so, let him pray again to be delivered of the narrow, superstitious, self-glorifying thoughts which will make him boast that God cares for him on some ground of his merit, or out of some partiality. There will come an answer to that prayer too. He will be avenged of another and a worse adversary than any bodily sickness can be. That which his proud, evil heart would have taken as a sign of his difference from his fellows, he will find was given him as a sign of his relationship to them, of the common care of the Father of all, for him and for them. He will begin to perceive why Christ, when He came to manifest that Father to men, did not merely preach of Him to crowds, but went about healing this palsied man, purifying that leper, bidding the unclean spirits go from those who dwelt in the tombs. God could not be discovered to the hearts of those who had deemed Him an enemy, unless He came unto

them in their particular grievances; unless He proved that He was bearing each infirmity and each sickness. But this was done that He might bring the outcast, excommunicated wretch, shut up in his lonely self, back into the concert of humanity, that he might know he was one of a body, every member of which must suffer with every other, because the Head of it suffers for all. Each was taught that he might cry to the Just Judge, "Avenge me of this adversary who is tormenting me," that so having his voice prepared and mellowed, all its false, jarring notes at last cleared away, he might be fit to unite with those Saints beneath the Altar, who never faint in their hope and prayer that the Lord God, faithful and true, will avenge the earth of its destroyers. He learns that he has had a Priest on earth, touched with the feeling of his sorrow, in all points tempted like as he is, that he may learn that he has a Priest within the veil Who originates all our intercessions, Who presents them all with the incense of His Own sacrifice, Who sits on His priestly, filial throne, till His Father has put all His enemies under His feet.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

February 14, 1858.

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1 THESSALONIANS v. 21, 22.

"PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD. ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL."

THE last clause of this verse is very commonly taken to mean, "Abstain from everything which looks like evil, from everything which a bystander would suspect to be evil." You may hear, not laymen only, but clergymen, alter the sentence into "Abstain from the *very* appearance of evil," or "*even* from the appearance of evil;" and probably not a few readers have a vague notion in their minds that such a text exists somewhere in the Bible. I do not think that our translators at all intended to convey this impression of St. Paul's words to their countrymen. Every evil appearance, or every appearance of evil, may denote naturally enough every shape or form which evil puts on. In that sense 'appearance' would be a fairly accurate translation of εἶδος. Some may prefer it to the word 'form,' or 'kind,' which would be the more natural and obvious rendering. But since (like

the word 'species' in the Vulgate) it is ambiguous, one may wish that it had never been adopted.

That St. Paul can never have meant his exhortation to bear the sense which we have forced upon it, a moment's thought will convince you. "*Judge not,*" says our Lord, "*according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*" That passage cannot affect the *construing* of our text, for the word in St. John is ὄψις, not εἶδος. But it directly affects the question, whether we are to judge of evil by the mere look or semblance; for remember the occasion which called forth the precept of Christ. He had healed a sick man on the Sabbath-day. This act had the *appearance* of evil. It appeared evil, not only to the accidental bystanders, but to the religious guides of the Jewish people. They decided at once and peremptorily that Jesus had broken the Law: they had evidently a plausible ground for their decision. And this is one of a series of cases. To the same head belongs His receiving sinners and eating with them; the acts and omissions which led to the charge, "He is a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber;" His endurance of the erring woman who washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. How carefully these parts of His conduct are recorded by the Evangelists! How evidently they think that, if they were blotted out of His life, He would not have perfectly revealed His Father, or been a complete pattern to His disciples! How

entirely the conscience of mankind has responded to that opinion! Devout men have felt and do feel that if these features were taken from the Divine Image, the whole would be changed. Do you believe that St. Paul thought otherwise? Do you suppose he would have taught his Thessalonian disciples that these conspicuous lines in the character of Christ were not to be copied, but to be treated as dangerous?

How far does his own example justify this suspicion? You will remind me, perhaps, that he told the Corinthians that he would eat no meat so long as the world stood, rather than cause his brother to offend. You may tell me that he warned them that if they acted upon their knowledge that all meats are equally innocent, they might destroy the weak brother for whom Christ died. Was not this avoiding an appearance of evil when there was no real evil? Certainly not. The highest principle of Christian morality, the law of fellowship, the law of love, might be violated for the sake of an animal gratification, for the sake of a petty display of intellectual superiority. He discarded a superficial rule—one that was *apparently* sound—to get at à solid and real principle.

But did not St. Paul follow most strictly the steps of his Master, did he not depart altogether from the maxim which has been ascribed to himself, when he appeared in the eyes of Jews, converted and unconverted, perhaps of Apostles, to be violating sacred

customs, and trampling upon the Covenant of his fathers? To which doctrine did he conform, when he openly ate with Gentiles in the presence of Peter and Barnabas, who were striving to keep up what every Jew must have considered a graceful, if not a necessary, recognition of the difference between the Chosen People and all others? How did he avoid the mere look of evil, when he left the impression upon the minds of his countrymen that he was overthrowing the righteousness of the Law, by preaching the righteousness of Faith? His life was one long fight against appearances; one continual proof that, in order to assert any great and precious truth, the chances of appearing evil to bad men and to good men must be deliberately encountered.

But we need not seek for evidence at a distance. The passage before us is as decisive on the point as any we could find in Scripture. The three clauses, "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from all appearance of evil,*" are not associated by accident. They do not follow each other merely as one sentence at the close of a letter may follow another. Every person who has paid the least attention to St. Paul's style will perceive how clearly the relation between them is indicated by the antithetical words κατέχετε, ἀπέχεσθε. "Hold on to the good, hold off from every form of evil." And it is clear that the thought which determines the force of both these clauses—the thought which is uppermost in the

writer's mind—is that which is expressed by the word "prove,"—δοκιμάζετε. Now that word and its cognate substantive, whether it refers to things or to persons, to the soundness of money, or to the qualifications for citizenship, always denotes a process of testing. St. Paul had applied it in that sense in the second chapter of this Epistle. "*So we speak, not as pleasing men, but God that trieth the hearts.*" That one instance shows that when we are bidden to prove anything, it is meant that we should look below the outside—the appearance—of it, to ascertain its real worth, its essential nature. So, then, according to the popular interpretation of the text, St. Paul would say, in the first clause: "Be not content with the mere semblance of anything which you have to do with. Look into it; find out the good of it, hold to that." And he would say in the second and corresponding clause: "Be always afraid of semblances. The moment anything looks like evil, fly from it. Throw away your tests and proofs; simply hold off from that which seems evil to you or to the people about you." This is not an antithesis, but a contradiction; such a one as it is not very reverent to impute to an inspired man, such as would be discreditable in an honest man. In St. Paul's case it would make his life a greater contradiction even than his words. I trust we shall be ready to examine the language of the text, that we may see whether it does not offer us some safer and more helpful guidance than this.

I. He tells us first, to *prove* or *test* all things. This text has often been taken to express the peculiar character and virtue of Protestant Divinity, while the words, "Charity believeth all things," or "Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed," have been claimed as mottoes by its opponents. I do not know a more honourable watchword to inscribe upon our banners than this of *prove* all things, if only we know what it signifies, and how St. Paul used it. Assuredly he did not understand it, as some of us do, "Bring all things to the *standard* of your private judgment; see whether they accord with that; only hold fast that which does." Nor, I apprehend, would any man of science, who speaks of testing, proving, subjecting facts to experiment, tolerate such an interpretation of his language. He would exclaim, "Why, this habit of reducing all that I see to a rule, a standard, an anticipation in our own mind, is just the one from which Bacon sought to deliver us. He told us that we were continually liable to do this; that as long as we did it we never arrived at truth; that there was a method of investigation, by which we could escape from the necessity of doing it." If there is not that which is true absolutely,—true for all men,—search and inquiry are very fruitless; we had better lay them aside. If my judgment is to be the measure of all things that I see and converse with, if I am at liberty to use it as such a measure, if there is no

higher measure to which I can bring it, that it may be deepened and expanded, it is certain to become narrower and feebler every day. Whereas, if I continually acknowledge the presence of a Light which is greater than any organ of mine can take in, but yet with which I am intended to hold communion, I shall desire that that Light may enter more and more into me, to purify my vision and enlarge its capacities. I shall desire to see all things in this Light. And it will so distinguish between what is fantastic and what is real, between the shows of things and their substance, that it will not be possible for me to accept one for the other, either in obedience to my own natural taste and inclination, or at the bidding of any earthly guides and authorities whatsoever. This process of proving or testing the phenomena of the moral and spiritual world is not exercised as much in schools by learned men—though they have great need of it, and should use all the aids they have for conducting it—as on sick-beds, by men and women who are fighting with sore temptations, and are asking God's help against them. They acquire the faculty of distinguishing that which will last and will stand the fire, from that which must be burnt up, as none acquire it who are not tried in the fire themselves. And therefore, instead of admitting that the charity which believeth all things is of an opposite nature and quality to this wisdom or judgment which proveth all things, I should think they are closely

akin, and that one can never flourish without the other. The Love which seeks to find God, Who is Perfect Love, cannot be content with counterfeits of Him, with mere phantoms that represent Him. The Judgment which is impatient of what is false, has no pleasure in mere rejection; it only wishes to discover that which it can embrace and hold fast. The Protestant who felt a strong necessity to prove all things, claimed the Bible as his great help and teacher in that work. Nor did it ever disappoint him, till he forgot what the work was; till he sought its help in merely building up his own notions and confuting his adversaries, instead of asking it to assist him in discerning the right from the wrong, in his own heart and in his dealings with his fellows. The Romanist, feeling the need of something given him, of a truth revealed, rejoiced in his Catholic Creeds. Nor did they disappoint him, till he ceased to treat them as Catholic; till he built over them and about them a huge edifice of individual notions, the aggregation of centuries of teaching and speculation, which have hidden from men the Truth that is with them and belongs to them all; which have led hundreds of thousands who dared not test them, to disbelieve them and the truth together; which have made the blessing upon those who have believed, in the midst of the thick darkness which they have created, a great and divine blessing indeed.

II. Next, St. Paul tells us to prove *all things.*

He does not say, "Prove or test certain doctrines which are submitted to you;" though those are of course not excluded. He assumes that everything whatsoever with which we come into contact,—the ordinary notions and maxims of society, the habits and traditions of the literary, or philosophical, or professional, or religious circle in which we are moving, the words we speak, the common every-day experiences of life,—all need sifting and testing, that we may know what there is of good in them. He fully acknowledges that there is a good in them all; they would not be worth proving if there were not; there would be no way of proving them. The search for this good is your business. You are not to sit down in a carping, fault-finding spirit, to ascertain how much your fathers or kinsfolk or neighbours have misled you; how much worse your profession, or trade, or country is than all others. You are to set before you an object the most unlike possible to this. When there is much about you which you feel and know is evil, you are still to pursue the good, and to believe that it is there, and that you shall be rewarded by discovering it, and that the discovery will be the means of emancipating you and your brethren from that which is hurting and enslaving you and them. Yes, believe that the good is in *all* things, in those that you have made little account of, in those that you have been taught by others to hate, in those which you have learnt to hate yourself. Do

not shrink from confessing that there is and must be a goodness, a beauty, at the bottom of them all, else they would not have continued to exist. Do not be afraid of inquiring for it lest you should fall in love with the evil and ugliness which are also in them. Be sure that you will not know them fully, detest them heartily, till you have perceived that which is opposed to them and have done it homage. Numbers in our days have plunged headlong into a false system, because they and their teachers were not observant of this rule. They heard mere denunciations of the evil; they found they had been deceived, that there was a good which they had not been apprised of; and partly to revenge their first mistake, partly from loss of confidence in those who had practised a pious fraud upon them, partly from being deprived of all power of distinguishing, they accept the whole compound together.

III. St. Paul goes on, "Hold fast the good." When you have perceived it, detected it, anywhere, then cleave to it, hug it, swear that you will not let it go. Be sure that what you want, is the substantial good; the beauty in which is no flaw. Having that, you are sure you have what God in His infinite love desires that you should have; you have what the Son of God took your nature and died upon the cross that you might have; you have what the Spirit of God is stirring you and all creatures to sigh and groan that you may have. Not that it is

yours, in any sense which can enable you to say to a neighbour, "It is not thine." Not that it is yours in any sense which can enable you to say, "It belongs to me; I cannot lose it. I may take my ease, eat, drink, and be merry." It is yours by faith; it is yours because it is God's, and He invites you to believe Him and trust Him, and so to inherit His own Righteousness and Truth and Blessedness. It is yours because it is not in your own keeping, because you are lifted out of yourself that you may enjoy it.

IV. And so we come at last to the word with which I began, "Abstain," or "keep yourselves, from every form or appearance that is evil." You have seen the good; you have grasped it; now have nothing to do with whatever is not that, with whatever counterfeits it. There will be every variety of evil shapes, forms, appearances; but if you have learnt to look below, to try and test the heart of things, you will not be misled by this variety. You will detect the evil, the lie, under each new disguise, and you will be able to stand aloof from it; to shun the contact of it. Just so far as the truth has become precious and familiar to you, this likeness, this double, this mockery, will be loathed and kept at a distance. This precept never becomes obsolete or unnecessary,—nay, becomes more necessary each day, as the final struggle between light and darkness, good and evil, truth and falsehood, draws nearer. For the shapes are becoming ever more complicated,

and the mimicry of that which is most adverse to them more complete. They must impose upon us if we trust to our knowledge of the past, or our sagacity in detecting the errors and wrong of others; or our skill in applying rules which we have received from the precept of men. Everything will fail us, but a love of the good, an utter distrust of ourselves, a continual sense of the presence of evil, a continual assurance that Christ is also present with us and has overcome it.

But I conceive, brethren, that the peril of our being vanquished by some of its manifold forms will be infinitely increased, if we adopt that opinion which has gained such strength from the supposed authority of St. Paul. To believe that we must fly from that which people think evil, from everything which seems evil to ourselves at the first glance, is to become a prey of evil in its worst sense. All reformation, in every age, has been retarded by this doctrine, all corruptions have been sanctified by it. And yet it has not restrained a single rash reformer; it has not preserved a single truth from outrage. The conscience of men cannot be bound by a rule, which must be transgressed before a single brave act can be done, a single right principle asserted. And therefore the only effect of proclaiming it is to render earnest men doubtful whether the Apostle's authority is to be heeded, and to deprive them of the direction and warnings which his wisdom would supply. You tell

a man who is betaking himself to foolish eccentricities of practice, that there is nothing really blamable in what he is doing, but that he ought to avoid the appearance of evil. He knows that in a thousand cases he ought not to avoid that, and therefore his silly innovations become canonized in his mind as if they were the result of some manly effort to resist the opinion of the world. Why did not you tell him that God has given him a work to do, that his influence over others is a trust which is to fit him for this work; that all affectations, as they impair his influence, are violations of this trust, imply a low estimate of his work, and that therefore they should be cast aside, not as apparent evil, but as real evil? You tell a man who clings to some course of action which he has adopted not from mere self-will, but believing it to be the best, that others are grieved by it, and that he should avoid the appearance of evil. You rouse his conscience; that trifle immediately becomes serious to him; he dares not lay it aside; he will fight for it, die for it. Why did not you solemnly bid him prove and test that which he was doing; hold fast that which was the real good and sense of it; and discard the rest, not as apparently evil, but as really evil, inasmuch as it was a self-indulgence, and was not offered up on the shrine of that Christian Unity, from which Christian Truth cannot long be separated? These are instances—your own experience may supply a hundred similar—where this maxim proves ut-

terly ineffectual to accomplish its own ends. For every vulgar worldly argument which puts on a religious dress, and affects an authority that does not belong to it, must prove feeble and worthless. The only consequence of resorting to it is, that you benumb the moral sense, that you degrade the hearts of those whom you bring under its influence. They will plead it for deserting a friend, for refusing to maintain an unpopular cause; they will forget it the moment it interferes with any passion or propensity of their own. Oh, brethren, let us ask the help of God, that we may be less moved by that which merely looks good or looks evil! Let us ask that, in all the common work of life, we may seek the substantial and reject the semblance. So, in the highest region of all, we shall enter into fellowship with Him Who is the Truth, and be delivered from the Spirit of Lies, who is His adversary; so, when He, Whose face was marred more than any man's, Who appeared to men an evil-doer, Who was crucified in weakness, shall be revealed in the glory of His Father and the holy angels, we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

First Sunday in Lent.

February 21, 1858.

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2 Corinthians xiii. 5.

"EXAMINE YOURSELVES, WHETHER YE BE IN THE FAITH; PROVE YOUR OWN SELVES. KNOW YE NOT YOUR OWN SELVES, HOW THAT JESUS CHRIST IS IN YOU, EXCEPT YE BE REPROBATES?"

The etymology of the word 'reprobate' is not generally present to our minds when we use it. But it is better preserved in the dialect of common life than in that of theologians. When we speak of a man being an utter reprobate, we mean that various experiments have been made for his reformation, and that all have failed. He has been proved and found worthless. Divines, at least of one school, have given the word quite a different, almost an opposite, signification. They have supposed a reprobate to be one whom God has sentenced without trying or proving him; one who comes into the world with a mark of condemnation stamped upon him, which is known from the first to his Maker, is gradually discovered to himself, finally is declared to the Universe.

Our translators have not adopted this sense of the

word in their version of my text. It is evident that they have adhered strictly to the etymology. For no considerate person can doubt that they intended 'reprobate,' in one clause of this sentence, to correspond with 'prove' in the other. So they have made an ingenious attempt to express the relation between the words δοκιμάζετε and ἀδόκιμοι in the original. There can be no doubt, I think, that we must try to preserve that relation if we would preserve the sense of the passage. And the more we reflect on the other applications of the word ἀδόκιμος by St. Paul, the more, I think, we shall perceive how much justification they had for the force which they have given it here. The ground which has often drunk in the rain, and has brought forth nothing but briars and thorns, is called in the Epistle to the Hebrews ἀδόκιμος. St. Paul keeps his body in subjection, lest, having preached to others, he himself should become ἀδόκιμος. Those who will not retain God in their knowledge are said, in the Epistle to the Romans, to be given over εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν. In all these cases there has been a trial; the result is worthlessness. Only you will perceive that the result corresponds to the nature of the thing on which the experiment is made. The ground is found to be barren: that is a natural thing. That which answers to barrenness in a moral being is incapacity of discernment; the loss of power to prove himself. This further sense must not be forgotten in the text before us.

I. We shall forget it if we are not observant of the Apostle's first words. If we substitute for the command, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," this: "Examine yourselves, whether ye have a *right* to be in the faith," we shall alter the passage vitally and essentially. St. Paul does not say to the Corinthians: "Examine yourselves, whether you have passed through certain states of feeling and experience which entitle you to call yourselves Christians or Believers. See whether you have that in your minds which gives you a warrant to claim the privileges which you profess to claim for yourselves in your Baptism." But he says: "Try yourselves,—bring yourselves to the strictest inquiry,—whether you are actually claiming these privileges, whether you are believing that which you say you believe." This would appear to be the natural signification of the words, "if you are in the faith." The Corinthians would have some cause to complain of the Apostle for misleading them in a most serious matter, if he meant them to understand that perhaps after all they would be wrong in applying to themselves the truths and the promises which they heard of in the Gospel of Christ. He had said, in all his discourses, what he said in the lesson this evening: "God had sent forth His Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons." If the Corinthians were to examine whether these words excluded or comprehended them,—whether they were within or

without the circle of that adoption which had so deep and wide a ground,—he should surely have given them some hints for carrying on the inquiry; he should have told them in what way they were to ascertain the limitations of words which sounded so universal; how they were to know who were cut off from blessings which he had spent his life in declaring to be intended for men of all races and kindreds, of all intellectual conditions, of all moral conditions. And he should not have used the words, "Examine *yourselves*." He should have said, "Examine the terms of God's covenant, to discover the flaws in it, to see whether you do not come under some of the exemptions from its general amnesty, whether you are really admitted to the condition of citizens, and not on some plea or other still retained as bondmen." And then he should have shown them how, if their examination ended in the discovery that they were not within the range of the Divine Mercy and help, they were to bring forth any of the fruits which he called them to bring forth, seeing that, according to his uniform teaching, they must have faith in God, and He must work in them, in order that they might bring forth these fruits. If the trial issued in the conviction that they were in a most evil moral state, how were they ever to be raised out of it? What hand was to help them, if the longest and most careful consideration led them to feel that God's Hand was not held out to them—that they stood in no relation to Him at all?

All these extravagant contradictions, which, monstrous as they are in logic, are far more so in experience and in their moral effect, proceed, you perceive, not from construing St. Paul's words literally, but from fearing to do so, from unwillingness to take them and obey them just as they stand. If he desired them to understand, as you would suppose he did, that they ought to be in the faith, that it was their duty to call upon God as their Father, and to acknowledge themselves as His children, the Apostle is at least consistent with himself. The Prophets of old had told the Jews that they were continually forgetting the Covenant of their God, distrusting Him Who had called them to trust Him. All Jewish history, the Apostle had told the Corinthians, was an ensample to them, upon whom the ends of the world had come. They were as liable to forget the new and better Covenant, as their forefathers were to forget the inferior one. They were as likely to think that they were not the children of God, as those who were under the Law that they were not His servants. The consequences would be the same in kind, worse in degree,—heartlessness, idolatry, division, self-exaltation, alternating with despondency. It was most needful for them to examine themselves, whether they were getting into this state of indifference and forgetfulness, to see whether outward as well as inward tokens did not show that it was creeping upon them, whether they were not conscious of a continual

and growing degeneracy, whether the loss of brotherly feelings towards men, did not accompany the loss of filial feelings towards God.

Such a trial would be, in the strictest sense, one of themselves, not of God's words or deeds, for it presumed *these* to have the largest, freest, most gracious signification. Not of other men, of whose inner state they could know very little, but of their own very selves. And this was the more abundantly necessary from the very nature of God's New Covenant, and of the relation in which it said they stood to Him. For it was to themselves, to their spirits, that He had spoken, with these He had established His intercourse and fellowship. He had redeemed them from the dominion of visible things, that He might set up His Kingdom within them.

II. Therefore St. Paul goes on: "*Or know ye not your own selves, that Christ is in you?*" I am afraid that many readers of our version suppose that this question has no direct connection with the previous command, and that *your own selves* is not here in the accusative, as it was before, but in the nominative. Such a separation, still more such a construction, would be fatal to the sense of the passage.

The Apostle has been speaking of self-examination; now he speaks of the self-knowledge which justifies that examination, which makes it a reasonable, a possible exercise. Let me dwell a little on this subject; it is one of personal interest to us all, and

one which has caused infinite perplexity, at least to many of us.

If we take up almost any religious book,—especially any book which is written to assist us in turning the season of Lent to good account,—we meet with exhortations to the duty of self-examination, and with certain rules or hints which are to assist us in performing it. Our consciences bear witness to the reasonableness of the admonition; we feel that we are liable to the most grievous moral falls if we are not watching our steps; that we are not claiming the dignity of spiritual beings, if we are ignorant of the acts and movements of our own spirits. We cannot deny that the suggestions which are offered us are the fruit of much experience, and must be valuable to us if we could avail ourselves of them. But when we make the effort, this terrible contradiction is forced upon us. We commence this task that we may be honest, and yet it seems to involve us in dishonesty. In the trial we are affecting to conduct, are not plaintiff, defendant, witnesses, judge, all one? Are we really proving ourselves, really passing judgment on ourselves? Are we not continually bribed to overlook acts which require distinct and solemn condemnation? Do we not indulge much remorse for trifles that ought not to occupy us? Are we not losing our sense of the distinction between right and wrong,—are we not learning to magnify, to reduce,—to distort, through the very process

which we are told is the security for our seeing objects in their just proportions?

And then another doubt occurs. Is this self-consciousness a good thing? Does it not hinder action, destroy energy? Does it not cultivate a habit of mawkishness, an indelicate desire to expose the most secret passages of our souls, even to the public gaze? The rage for that kind of confession is not perhaps as great in England now as it was some years ago, though it is by no means extinct. But in how many other ways do men testify that they feel this self-consciousness to be a disease which will destroy them if they cannot be cured of it! What numbers does it bring to the feet of the spiritual director! How it tempts others into speculations about the 'I' and the 'not I,' when the 'I' means every one except the person who is playing with the philosophical puzzle, and the 'not I' nothing at all! What multitudes, who find comfort in neither of these expedients, try, in a whirl of business or of pleasure, to become torpid, to lose the pressure of life in a dance of death!

I dare not deny that there is a Self-Consciousness, cultivated not unfrequently by religious as well as philosophical teachers, by religious as well as philosophical books, which has this evil character, and leads to these evil results. But I believe that that Self-Consciousness is the very opposite of the Self-Knowledge which has been said to descend from Heaven,

and that the Self-Knowledge which St. Paul speaks of in the text, is the one effectual deliverance from it. The old Greek teacher thought that he could only extricate his young fellow-citizens from the philosophical webs which had been spun about them, and which were entangling their consciences as well as their intellects, by leading them to Self-Knowledge. The path in which he led them was through questionings about common things, and the words they were using continually. But he believed, that he had only risen to any knowledge himself by the aid of an ever-present dæmon, whom he could not confound with himself, who was his faithful monitor, telling him of his dangers, rebuking him for his follies; who was showing him how he might rise above accidents and circumstances, and his own narrow conceptions, and embrace that which is and which abides. That faith appears to have given sincerity to his own mind, and power over others. For they too, he was sure, must have such a guide; if they tried to act rightly, they would find that they had.

This faith of Socrates, if it was as true as the simplicity and manliness of his own life and death prove it to have been, demands an expounder. Who can tell us of this unseen guide? Who can say what he has done and is doing and would do for each of us? Who can inform us whether he cares only for some favoured individuals, or for the race? St. Paul boldly meets the demands. He speaks out the *Name* of the

invisible Lord and Teacher of his own spirit; he says to each man, "He is the Lord and Teacher of thy spirit." He says that He has come into the world, and taken the nature of men upon Him, and died the death of men, and risen from the dead as Man, and ascended on high as Man, and is ever living as Man at the right-hand of God. He says to the Corinthians, "*Know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?*"

Here is the true Self-Knowledge; here is that which makes Self-Examination a reality and not a fiction. The Plaintiff, the Defendant, and the Judge are now NOT the same. A Judge is standing at the doors of our hearts, Who can discern the thoughts and intents of those hearts, Who is acquainted with our most solitary acts, with our most secret thoughts; Who can distinguish with clear infallible insight the precious from the vile, the treacherous from the sincere; Who desires that we should distinguish them; Who is inspiring us continually with love for the one, with hatred of the other. If we confess Him as our Lawgiver and Judge, we confess One Who cannot be misled by any pretensions, Who will never yield to our self-flatteries; but Who has no wish to condemn us, Who never charges us with wrong but that He may show us the way out of it; never shows us that we are fallen, without helping to raise us up; never convinces us that we are sunk in death, without setting before us the promise and assurance of Life.

Therefore St. Paul uses very singular and striking language on the subject of Self-Consciousness, when he is declaring to us the relation in which we stand to Christ. He speaks of dying to ourselves, of our rising again as new creatures in Him. He does not represent this death as the effect of some mystical or theosophic process of annihilation. He does not represent this resurrection as a high effort of an individual soul, grasping at some distant blessing which is far beyond the ken of the vulgar. He teaches us that this is our proper, human state. The revelation of Christ, according to him, was nothing less than the revelation of a Universal Brother of men, in Whom each man has his life, apart from Whom each man has only death. Therefore he tells all baptized men, that since by a simple act Christ has owned them as His brothers, as of that race of which He is the Head, they are to "*count themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.*" They are to rise up as redeemed, regenerate men; to enter, in that character, in that strength, upon the hard fight of life; to repulse in that name all the enemies that have overpowered them, and that will daily threaten to overpower them.

Here, then, is the real deliverance from that self-consciousness which wise men denounce, and which their very denunciations help to cultivate; which we fly hither and thither to escape from, and which starts up in newer and darker and more terrible

shapes out of every den in which we hide ourselves. Are you tormented by the accusation of some Christian preacher? Does he call you by names which you think are not applicable to you? But will you be treated better if you betake yourself to the philosophical observer? Will Rochefoucauld deal more kindly with you? Will he make more pleasant discoveries to you about yourselves? Be angry with the preacher, be angry with the philosopher; thou hast a right to be, if thy anger is on behalf of thy race, if thou meanest to say that humanity is libelled, when it is represented as capable only of what is base or mean. But that thou mayest vindicate the cause of humanity, be true to thyself. The preacher torments thee, the keen-sighted critic of acts and motives torments thee, because thy conscience is half-responding to his words, because it is saying, "Yes, thou hast thought, thou hast felt, even as he describes. There has been this low grovelling pleasure in even the sufferings of thy friends; thou art disposed to sacrifice family, country, the universe, to thy own interest or pleasure; thou art inclined, as Adam Smith testifies, to care less for the ruin of an empire than for a pain in thy own finger." Is there something else in thee besides that? Art thou sure of it? Yes, verily, thou wast told so of old when thou wert a child. Thou heardest then that thou wast a member of Christ. Thou heardest that He was in thee. And that is true still. That is the reason why thou canst not submit to be treated

as an alien and outcast; why thy blood rises in thee when thou art told that thou art susceptible of nothing but foul impressions, that thou art influenced only by grovelling motives, that thou canst not deny thyself for the sake of the highest ends. It is a lie. Hold fast thy conviction that it is. But who told the lie? The preacher? Rochefoucauld? No! thou hast told the lie. Thou hast acted as if it were impossible for thee to be anything better than they say thou art. For thou hast forgotten what thou art. Thou hast exchanged the heavenly self-knowledge—that which comes from the revelation that Christ is the Head of every man, that thou art a very member incorporate in His body, for the earthly self-knowledge, that which comes only from the consideration of all the acts which men do when they are acting upon the dream and delusion that each is apart from his neighbour, that he can work out a scheme of existence of his own, that we are moving amidst a whirl of atoms, in a chaos, not a universe.

That is the miserable faith to which we all have a natural tendency, which will certainly overtake us and possess us if we have no higher faith to set against it. Oh, then, let us examine ourselves, whether we are in that higher faith! let us prove day by day our right to abide in it! This examination involves no wretched poring over our own motives. It leads us at once to turn from the accusing spirit, which tells us that we are yielding to some vile motive which

will lead to some vile act, and to ask for the inspiration of Him in Whom are the springs of all right action. This examination involves no neglect of plain work for the sake of morbid contemplation. It is in work we learn what we are liable to become if we have no helper, if we are left to ourselves. It is in work we learn to trust Him and depend upon Him. The temptation to be fretful and to be cowardly, to utter keen and bitter words, to feed upon flatteries, to feed upon thoughts of malice or lust, to palter with dishonesty in common acts, to lie for the sake of a worldly end or of a godly end, the temptations of each particular craft and calling, the temptations of domestic life, of national life, of ecclesiastical life,—these are the schools in which men have learnt to examine themselves, in which they have learnt the feebleness of mere rule, the necessity of a present living Teacher, in which they have found what that old nature is, which has to be mortified and crucified, what that new and true man, whom Christ would renew in us day by day.

In that school they have learnt the force of those last words to which I alluded first, "*Except ye be reprobate.*" They have learnt to put on them a meaning not less serious and awful, though far more practical, far less dishonourable to God, than that which they sometimes bear in the dialect of those who think they may apply them to all people except themselves. Oh! let us apply them strictly to ourselves! Let us

believe that by a habit of indifference, thoughtlessness, forgetfulness, we may become ἀδόκιμοι, utterly worthless, after we have undergone all discipline,—giving signs of that worthlessness by losing the power of discerning good from evil, unable to know that mighty, blessed truth, that Christ is in us the giver of strength, the hope of glory. That this state may not come upon us, let us be continually assuring ourselves, assuring each other, that this is a truth, an everlasting truth, a truth upon which we can act, a truth which enables us to face the problems of our existence and of the world's existence, and not to shrink from them; a truth which will give us victory.

If people will teach us any other belief that will help us to live, we may consider it, but we have no time for endless, wearisome speculations about this subject or that. The world is moving on too fast, the energies which we need for action are too surely and evidently wearing themselves out. We need One Who can invigorate them, Who can pour His own Divine energy into them, Who can fit us for any new condition into which His world may come, and fit us to survive the dissolution of it. We need One Who will not hastily cast us off as worthless or reprobate, because we have resisted one warning after another, one mercy after another, but Who will try every method which an Infinite Wisdom can devise to bring us under His gracious yoke, to overcome the self-will which is our

destruction, to make us like Himself, to prepare us for that Day when He, Who has been working secretly upon our hearts and spirits, will be known openly; when He, Who for our sakes submitted to be tempted by the Evil Spirit, shall be revealed as the Deliverer from all temptations, as the Conqueror of all His enemies and ours.

Second Sunday in Lent.

February 28, 1858.

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2 Corinthians v. 14, 15.

"FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US; BECAUSE WE THUS JUDGE, THAT IF ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEN WERE ALL DEAD: AND THAT HE DIED FOR ALL, THAT THEY WHICH LIVE SHOULD NOT HENCEFORTH LIVE UNTO THEMSELVES, BUT UNTO HIM WHICH DIED FOR THEM, AND ROSE AGAIN."

Either there is a contradiction in this passage, or St. Paul's conception of love and its power is not the same with the one which is most prevalent among us. "*The love of Christ constrains us; because we judge:*" here seems to be a process of the understanding, strangely mixed up with a compulsion acting on the feelings or the heart. If the Apostle had to argue with himself that Christ died for all, because all were dead, and that men might not live to themselves, how can he affirm that a mere sense or passion of devotion to his Master urged him on to act or to suffer? If he was under the influence of such a passion, what need or what possibility of thinking, of deliberating, of concluding?

It cannot be said that this perplexity is owing to an error of the translator. St. Paul indeed uses the participle where we use a causal conjunction; he says, "*The love of Christ constrains us—having judged*" or "*concluded:*" but I do not see that this change, though noticeable on another ground, materially affects the point we are considering. St. Paul's language assumes that the love constrains those who do come to this conclusion or have come to it; he evidently assumes that the conclusion has some very close connection with the love and with the effects which it produces.

I would not suggest this thought to any one, if I was not sure that it does suggest itself in practice to hundreds, though they may not associate it with our text. There is no class of difficulties more serious and more tormenting in all times, but especially in this time, than those which concern the respective provinces of the heart and the intellect, the obligations of duty and the obligations of affection. The forms in which these questions present themselves are very various and complicated. If we have not tried to disentangle the threads before, they seem hopelessly interwoven when we meet them in particular events and circumstances; and yet, till we have met them in these events and circumstances, it seems almost like a school-task, or a child's play, to meddle with them. I believe the Apostle's words which have suggested the puzzle are the best solution of it. Let

us seek grace to understand what they must have meant to him, and what they mean to us.

I would remark at the outset, that the love of Christ can scarcely mean the love which the Apostle had, or which any man has, for Christ. It is very natural that this meaning should have been given to the words, for the intent of love shown to us, is to produce love in us; and we may easily fancy that the reflection or image, as it is nearer to ourselves, has more to do with us than that from which it is derived. Hence, whenever the love of Christ, or the love of God, is spoken of in the New Testament, it is supposed by many that the words must denote some feeling, or temper, or state of mind of the creature towards its Creator, of the emancipated spirit towards its Redeemer. Sermons and books of devotion have encouraged the opinion. They have recognized the fact that there was a ground for their love in the nature and acts of God; but they have thought that it was their chief business to dwell upon the results of these in men, to supply tests to discover how far they were present or absent, to point out the great blessing which will follow if they have actually been awakened, the exceeding misery and punishment which must follow if they are not to be found. I do not venture to say that such appeals to the human heart are not sometimes effectual in kindling that which is dormant, in leading men to confess their hardness and coldness. But I am afraid that just as

often they produce hypocrisy, dishonest efforts to discover the requisite signs, a still more violent effort to create them, quickness in detecting the sins and deficiencies of our brethren, an inclination to set off certain feelings of our own, present or past, as a compensation for positive ill-doings, which the conscience condemns. When once we come to think of all God's acts as a revelation of Himself, when once we really believe that the knowledge of Him standeth on eternal life, it seems impossible any longer to adopt this method. Then we feel that to present His acts and character to men must be the right, only way of producing the corresponding acts and characters in them. Idolatry, unbelief, despair, is the effect of all attempts to form images of excellence and beauty for ourselves. The Scripture, therefore, which contains the great protest against idolatry, the great warrant of faith, the great cure for despair, must always be understood as speaking first of the love which Christ exhibits, not first of that which is exhibited to him.

The very word for 'constrains' seems to suggest the thought of an atmosphere surrounding us, compressing us—of a power bearing upon us. It would be the strangest phrase imaginable if it meant something which proceeded from ourselves, a smoke or incense rising up to Heaven. But if we give it this signification, surely the greatest part of the perplexity which encountered us is removed. A feeling or

sympathy of ours may require to be distinguished accurately from an exercise of our judgments, even though experience tells us that there is some close relation between them. But a love coming down upon us, the love of a superior Being speaking to us, is not thus limited. The sun-light of a parent's or a teacher's countenance does not act merely on the affections of a child or a pupil, it acts upon his intellect, it gives him courage to think, power to perceive, vivacity in all parts of his being. The love of Christ then might well constrain the judgment to a right and reasonable conclusion, as well as the hands to right and reasonable acts. If you suppose the Divine Love at work on any creature, you would expect it to act generally, diffusively,—to leave no faculty just as it was before, to bring those out into particular clearness and vigour, which were most ready for the influence; sometimes to cause an immediate glow in the passive and susceptible feelings, sometimes to stir up the active powers; sometimes to reach the heart directly, sometimes to reach it through the narrow and winding passages of the understanding.

This, I think, would be our general conclusion. But it is much more intelligible when we consider it in connection with St. Paul's application of it. The opinion or judgment at which he arrives is, that if Christ died for all, all were dead. The first thought of a child or a pupil whose inner spirit has been

awakened by the genial encouragements of a friend or a teacher is, "What should I be if I had not this? How cold, hard, I was, before I had it!" That impression is only partially true. If that influence had been wanting to call the seeds within into life, another might have been provided. When it is withdrawn, another more suitable to a new stage of growth may succeed it. St. Paul's inference, though the same in kind with this, is absolute and universal. As he confesses the love of Christ to be the power which is acting upon his will and constraining it, he determines at once that there would have been no life within him, if that love were away. What he pronounces for himself, he pronounces for all. But for this primary love, there would be no life in any creature; all would be dead. He goes on a step further. He connects this discovery with that truth which he had received first of all, that Christ died for our sins. That truth presents itself to him in a new light. He seems to see into the very hidden meaning of it. He died for all, because all were dead. There was no life in the creature which it could call its own; it had nothing but what it received. He gave up His own life to His Father because it was so. He would claim nothing of His own. As He refused to make the stones bread, by His own power, for His own use, but would receive all as from His Father, so He said at last, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." He would

claim no life or power or glory apart from His Father. By His own perfect, filial dependence, He maintained the dependence of all those whose nature He had taken, upon God. Their death could only be understood by His death, their life by His life.

And it was this same love which enabled St. Paul to see into the ultimate purpose, the final cause, of that death, so far as man is concerned, that "*we which live, should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for us, and rose again.*" He felt that as this Death was the great witness that all men in themselves were dead, so, taken together with the Resurrection, it was the witness that it was God's design to impart to all who would receive it, a new life: not a separate, selfish life, such as men sought to make for themselves; not a life in which each is pursuing an end of his own, striving after gifts and rewards of his own, impatient of the success of his fellows, always jostling them out of the way; but the life which was first in Him Who gave Himself up for all, a life proceeding from Him, continually referred to Him, of which He is the Author and the Finisher, the Spring from which all the different streams of it descend, the Ocean in which they meet.

In this way, I think, the different parts of this memorable sentence naturally unfold themselves out of each other, and illustrate, and receive illustration from, the whole doctrine, and from the acts of the Apostle.

He is so learned a teacher, there are in his Epistles so many turnings and windings of thought, so much of intellectual subtlety, that many have been inclined to fancy that he was elaborating a great system of Theology. But all simple readers feel that they are in the presence of a man of action, and not of a schoolman; of one who has been conversant with men and with their ways, with all the perplexities of human society, as well as with all individual conflicts. Luther laid it down as a canon, that no person could thoroughly understand Cicero's Epistles, who had not been a statesman for thirty years, or St. Paul's, who had not been occupied in ecclesiastical affairs for forty. But through all this doctrinal wisdom and practical life, there runs a stream of vehement passion, of personal feeling. No one can ever pretend that the heart has been in the least degree crushed by the understanding, or has grown colder from an experience of the world's indifference or unkindness. The teacher and the ruler is essentially and at all points the man; he magnifies his office, he feels himself to be nothing, and yet Paul himself is as distinct a person when he is seeking to heal the feuds in Corinth, or to remind the Galatians of the grace from which they had fallen, as when he is insisting that the magistrates of Philippi should fetch him out of his prison; or beseeching Philemon, for his sake, to deal kindly with the slave who had become a brother. Now, when we look for "the pulse of this machine,"

we shall seek it in vain in one quality or another of the Apostle's mind. We contradict his express and habitual words, if we trace his primary impulse to any feeling or calculation. There was a power of love which was urging him on, and could urge him on, in spite of all natural reluctance, to right thoughts and good deeds; which could, in spite of his natural selfishness, make him live and act as a brother and a fellow-worker in Christ's Church. He yielded himself to that power, he besought others to yield to it, since it was for them as much as for him, since he judged that Christ died for all, that all were dead without Him, that all might live through Him. This was the secret of his theology, his philosophy, his arguments, his passionate appeals to other men's consciences and hearts, his struggles, his joys, his sorrows, his vehemence, his weakness, his self-justification, his self-contempt, his rejection of the Law, his submission to the Law, his freedom to do all things, his labours to bring his body into subjection, his fear that he might be a castaway, his confidence that "neither height, nor depth, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, should separate him from the love of God which was in Christ Jesus his Lord."

But if it be so, brethren, the sense in which these words were most applicable to the Apostle of the Gentiles, is the sense in which they are most applicable to us; to us as forming a society of men; to

each one of us as an individual man, to the layman and to the priest. If any one of us was bold enough to say, "The love of Christ constraineth me," meaning thereby that he was acting, consciously, deliberately acting, at every moment, from love to his Master, from zeal for the honour of His Name, from care for His flock upon earth, how many acts and words would belie and mock the pretension! How the heart and conscience within would be tormented with the recollection of paltry deeds done with a secret—often scarcely a secret—purpose of self-glorification! How much worse must such deeds look in our own eyes, when we honestly scan them,—how much more mischief must they have done to others,—if there was some apparently religious or divine object on the face of them!

But where can be the peril to any man in saying, "I feel and know that the love of Christ has constrained me to do every act which I have been enabled rightly to do, because there is a death, a lovelessness in myself, which, but for such a power, must have hindered these acts altogether. I am sure that I am compassed about by this Divine Love, that it is continually striving against the self-seeking, self-willed temper to which I so readily yield, that it is thwarting my inclination to be the poor, isolated, self-concentrated individual I am trying to be, that it is stirring up the spirit of a man within me, kindling in me sympathies with my kind, making me know that

I was not created to live for myself, or die for myself." A man may confess this constraint who is most conscious of his own struggle against it, of the effort he has made to be independent of it, of the fierce determination he has often come to, that he will entirely break the bonds of love asunder and cast away its cords from him. Still the Love of Christ has been pressing him round, above, beneath, seeking to penetrate and possess him. If he yields to it, it will not be less felt as a constraint, he will not boast that now it is his own choice which is governing him, and not another who is guiding him and leading him. He must rejoice to feel that his will has been made a captive by the true Will which it was formed to obey. He must distinctly and deliberately judge that such authority, enforcing such obedience, is the true source of all freedom.

For he will judge that if one died for all, then were all dead. It will not be a hasty, momentary act of surrender to one from whom he has received a peculiar act of mercy. It will be a considerate, quiet submission to One Who has proved Himself the rightful governor and deliverer of him and of all his race. He confesses that One has died, not for him, but for all; for him as one member of a body, because he and all the members of that body were dead in themselves; because he and all the members of the body were capable of receiving a quickening, life-giving power from their Head. He submits to this Lord and Giver

of life, for experience has told him, and reason has told him, that he will not work harmoniously with his fellow-men on earth upon any other condition, and that he can work harmoniously with them while He is inspiring him, "*Who died for all, that they who live should not live unto themselves, but unto Him.*"

The same judgment is a warrant for charity to the good acts and the failures of his brethren. What excuse has he for undervaluing the kind deeds, and feelings, and words, of any man? How dares he minutely canvass and question the motives of them? They must proceed from the constraining love of Christ, whether he who exhibits them acknowledges that love or not, whether he is acquainted with the Name of Christ or not. They cannot proceed from the evil nature; they cannot proceed from the mere individual man, for he, apart from Christ, is dead: the death of Christ, as St. Paul says, proclaims him to be so. They must be Christ's own acts, however they may be marred and defiled by the instrument through whom they are performed. It is blasphemy against Him to call any instance of gentleness, or meekness, or charity, in any human being, a splendid sin; it is nothing less than calling good evil, and evil good; it is confounding Christ and the Spirit of Darkness.

On the other hand, it is this judgment which enjoins us to acknowledge how the darkness which we

feel in ourselves is working in others, how it is always trying to draw down the light into itself, and to extinguish it. Oh, surely there is no difficulty for any man who knows himself, to understand all the strifes, divisions, wars, fightings, heresies, schisms, of families, nations, churches! They are all in him: he feels them all, he is tormented by them. He carries about with him the witness of death, even of a second death, in which all that has been better in him, all that has bound him to his fellows, all that has separated him from beasts or devils, may be utterly extinguished. But he carries within him, too, the witness of a love—a sustaining love—which could not be about him if it were not about the world; which could not be influencing him, if it were not acting upon every one of his race.

We do homage to Christ's love, if, when we feel our emotions ever so cold, our hearts ever so barren, we yet hold them as His liege servants and subjects, Who can renew them and infuse His own Spirit into them. The understanding, honestly exercised, pays Him service as well as the affections. A man who bows because it is his duty, conscious that he has no sacrifices of gratitude or zeal to offer which are worthy to be accepted, may find that his lips too are touched by a coal from the Altar, that Christ does not send him away empty of those gifts which he sought for in vain among his own stores. But if we believe in the constraining love of Christ, we must

wish that it should make every part of us a sacrifice; that it should convert our reason, will, affections, bodies, into instruments of his good pleasure. We must desire that this love should not always strive in an element which opposes it and seems victorious over it. We must believe that this love will knit men's hearts to each other, will mould society according to its law, will not suffer men to make another law for themselves which is one of selfishness and hatred. In the faith, however hard to entertain and to hold fast, that Christ's constraining love is the mightiest power in the universe, that from which all powers have proceeded, and to which all powers must be subdued, we must be, think, act, struggle, day by day.

Nor let us forget that the same love which constrains all the dwellers upon earth, whether they confess the constraint and submit to it or no, must be acting more wonderfully, more perfectly, upon those who have passed out of our world, who have entered into some new region of work, with higher knowledge. How sad it would be to think that our relation to them depended upon the strength of our affection, or our memory! How often we must feel divided from them by that wilfulness, paltriness, falsehood, of which we are conscious. But when we recollect that it is Christ's love, not ours, which binds them to us,—when we remember that they know, far better than we do, and with more reality, that in Him

they are dead, that in Him only they have life,—we may be sure that the tie between us is one which no circumstances can sever. And as we kneel at Christ's altar, and confess that a love has been manifested at the Cross, which is higher than Heaven, deeper than Hell, we may rejoice that in it we have communion with all the spirits before the Throne; we may ask that all the sweetness and gentleness which Christ enabled them to show forth here, may appear in our lives; we may be sure that every hour we may know them better as we glorify Him more.

Third Sunday in Lent.

March 7, 1858.

PSALM XLVI. 10.

"BE STILL THEN, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD: I WILL BE EXALTED AMONG THE HEATHEN, AND I WILL BE EXALTED IN THE EARTH."

THERE is a class of persons who are designated by Divines and Church historians as Quietists. They have not formed a community, but they have been found in all communities. They are not distinguishable by their doctrines so much as by a certain temper or habit of mind. They have perhaps abounded most in the two religious bodies which are most diametrically opposed to each other, the Roman Catholics and the Quakers. It is difficult to say what age or circumstances have proved most favourable to their growth. They are to be traced among the Religious Orders of the fourteenth century, amidst the tumults of the Protestant sects in the sixteenth, in our Civil Wars, in the splendour and corruption of the French capital under Louis XIV., in the bustle and restlessness of these days.

It is unfair to judge of these Quietists from the representations of their opponents, or even from those which they have put forth themselves, if we are not acquainted with the context of their lives, with their education, with all the causes which may have led them to exaggerate the worth of one form of character and to depreciate another. But certainly, so far as they have manifested dislike to energetic qualities, to conflict, to mixture with the business and perplexities of their fellow-men, so far their spirit seems alien from that which we discover in the holy men whom the Bible brings before us. *They* seem to be living in an element of perpetual contention, and they confess that they are meant to live in it. Enemies are all around them; they cannot stand still or fly; they must be continually advancing, continually winning posts, or submitting to be made the spectacle in a triumph. A Quietist, who thinks that every day and year is to be a Sabbatical day or year, must find the Psalms especially a very uncongenial book. He cannot understand how a warrior like David could be a man after God's own heart; how he can have given thoughts and prayers and music to the Church in all periods.

And yet surely there is a Sabbatical character in these Psalms; they have a quiet of their own; all people have felt that they have. It has been the very charm which weary and tempest-tost pilgrims have discovered in them. To meditate on the Law by day

and night; to commune with his own heart on his bed; to wait patiently for the Lord; to rest in Him, is the continual effort of the same man who was engaged with hosts of visible and invisible foes. He learns the delight of rest through perpetual labour. He learns how vain, and idle, and hopeless labour is which is not grounded in rest. Only the man who feels that he has a home, can venture abroad into all the bustles of the world with a free and brave heart. Only one who knows the secret of being still, can toil manfully.

Here, then, is the true quietism of the Book of Psalms: quietism in the midst of action; quietism which only one who hears the call to act, and obeys it, can understand or prize. The ground of such quiet is contained in the verse I have read to you: "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth."

The 46th Psalm opens with the words, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." In such a time it must have been written; no one Psalm in the Book bears clearer and deeper traces of struggle and suffering. Many have referred it to the time of Hezekiah. They have seen in the words, "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of our God," an allusion to the stopping of the watercourses by Sennacherib, when he besieged Jerusalem; they have discovered in it some resemblance to the language of Isaiah, and have conjectured that

he might be the author of it. Undoubtedly everything in the tone and spirit of the Psalm befits such a season. And the recurring burden of it, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge," recalls that memorable passage in Isaiah, which belongs however to the time of Ahaz, where he tells those who were confederated against the Holy City, that if they associate themselves, they shall be broken in pieces; if they gather themselves together, it shall not stand: for God is with us.

The idea of the Emmanuel, the God with us, which comes forth so strongly in that passage, it has been truly felt, is the pervading one of Isaiah's prophecy; the one which gives the mind of the writer, and his discourses, all their sublimity. It is also the pervading idea of this Psalm, "The Lord of Hosts is with us." He is not coming down among us like some heathen god, to help us in an emergency, He is with us; not visible to our eyes, but really present, the strength and refuge of our hearts. "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

And therefore "*Be still.*" The thought of possible succour coming to us from some propitious Divinity, descending to the fight when other help fails, may impart a certain elevation to the spirit, may prevent t from utterly giving way; but it cannot bring stillness. It must rather occasion a flutter of expectation, a feverish anxiety, till the looked-for vision appears.

Only the belief of a Presence near us, with us, can inspire habitual awe, can keep us steady when all things are rocking around us, can take away the eagerness to move, or the cowardice which paralyzes movement.

"Be still and *know*." You cannot know this deep and eternal truth unless you are still. If you keep the waters of your spirit in continual stir, you will see nothing in them, or only the reflection of your own perturbed self. To know, is not to follow after a number of scattered fragments of information, or a multitude of ingenious speculations; it is to find a centre to which we can refer ourselves and all things else; it is to feel the ground upon which we are standing, to feel what that is which we did not create, which is and which must abide. Such knowledge must come in stillness. But, on the other hand, this knowledge will make us still. If we have it not, or are not seeking to have it, we must be restless and impatient; just so far as it is granted to us, it must bring tranquillity.

For "Be still and know that *I am God*." You may wonder to observe how often this form of speech is adopted in Scripture. The persons are frequently changed: sometimes God is spoken *of*; sometimes He speaks. We should experience a grievous loss if this were not so. Much more is expressed by this change of form than could be expressed by adherence to that which may seem to us more obvious and natural. So we are instructed that it is God who reveals Himself

to us. He says, "I am God;" not a conception of your minds, not one Whom you make what He is, by your mode of thinking of Him, but a living Person, Who is saying to you what He said to Moses in the bush, "I Am;" Who is teaching you that you could not be, if He were not; that all the thoughts, apprehensions, intimations of your spirits, were given you by Him, and are meant to lead you to Him. "Be still and know that I am God;" not a mere Being, not a mere Ruler, but the perfectly Good Being, the perfectly Righteous Ruler, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin:" the God from Whom all dreams, and impressions, and images of goodness, which you find in yourselves, which you see in your fellow-creatures, which you try to embody in the works of your hands, have been derived; Who can alone show you what the perfect goodness is, Who can alone open your eyes to take in that image after which you are formed, to see Whose it is, and to perceive that from its fulness all creatures have received grace for grace.

The Jew was taught, by a wonderful discipline, to turn from the likeness of all things in Heaven above or in the earth beneath, to turn from the works of his own hands, and from whatever he was most prone to adore, to this Living God, Who had chosen him and his fathers, that they might know His Name and confess Him to be the Lord. They were trained in a

school of suffering, to feel the emptiness and falsehood of all visible creature-worship; to feel that if they were to be preserved in any time of trouble, to be delivered from the curse of their own follies, to be a wise, understanding, righteous people, they must go back to the unseen King and Deliverer; they must seek in stillness to know Him; they must confess Him to be the Lord of those spirits which had revolted from Him, and which, in their effort to be independent, had become the slaves of all that was earthly and grovelling.

But the lesson would have been imperfect without the words that follow: "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." They were not withdrawn from the contemplation and worship of visible objects, that they might despise them. They were not separated from the nations round about, that they might regard their thoughts, and acts, and life, as of no value in God's account. The Lord Whom they worshiped, Whom in stillness they were permitted to know, Who was their strength and refuge in every time of trouble, to Whom they might return when they had forgotten His covenant and worshiped strange gods, was the Ruler of all the nations, had created the earth and all its treasures for His service. To despise the Heathen, or to despise the earth, was to despise Him; the Jew existed to assert the sacredness of both, by claiming both as parts of His dominion. Even as a comfort in any

disaster, individual or national, the belief in God's presence, in His personality, in His goodness, would have been unsatisfactory, if it had not been accompanied with this belief in His power, with this assurance that it would one day make itself manifest over the universe, and would crush all that opposed it. For the powers of the Heathen were threatening them; they were asserting that the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob was like the gods of Hamath and Arphad, of Hena and Ivah, that His power and government might be swept away as theirs had been. The dynasts of the earth, the powers of nature, were measuring their strength against Him. They must triumph and become the tyrants over mankind for ever, if there were not a sure witness and prophecy, that the God of Righteousness and Truth would establish His Kingdom over them all, and that of that Kingdom there should be no end.

Those Israelites who had learnt these lessons, who had really sought in stillness to know God, were prepared to receive the Only Begotten Son as the Express Image of His Person. But it was hard to understand how He Who came in great humility, though He might through that humility show forth all the righteousness and graciousness of the Father, could ever be exalted over the Heathen, could ever be exalted over the earth. It needed the death, and resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, to reconcile that conviction, which gave the heart all its rest

and calmness, with that which gave it all its hope. It needed the descent of the Holy Spirit to make it possible for men to feel at once that the Lord of Hosts was with them, that the knowledge of Him was peace and rest and eternal life; and to go forth as conquerors of the Heathen and of the earth. The want of a continual refuge from the troubles which beset them round, drove them to seek God in His secret habitation; the love which they acquired for their fellow-men through converse with Him, urged them to carry His Name into all lands, to claim all people for His servants and His children. They found that the Church had no ground to stand upon except the assurance, "I am God," and therefore that its true home and rest were in the unseen world; they found that it could not claim that home or that rest, unless it said that every corner of the earth, every creature that walked upon it, all that was done in it, had been redeemed for God, and was subject to His sovereignty. They saw that if ever the members of the Church forgot that it belonged to the invisible world, it would lose all its influence over the visible world; that if ever they forgot to exalt its Master over the nations and over the earth, they would also lose their interest and fellowship in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Brethren, it is a great question for us to ask ourselves, whether both these dangers are not assailing us at this time, and from the same cause? The words, "Be still and know that I am God," sound like strange

words in the ears of most of us. "How can we be still," we ask, "while all things are in movement, while all things are unsettled? How can we be still while every one is hasting to be rich, hasting to get beyond his neighbour? How can we be still when all the political world is full of slumbering fires, ready to break forth? How can we be still while all the religious world is full of controversies, tumults, hatreds?" The answer surely should be, "Because there is all this mutation, restlessness, insecurity, therefore this is the very time to obey the command, Be still. For assuredly if we do not, we never shall know that the Lord He is God; we shall not believe, however we may pretend it, that He abides, and that He is with us, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the depths of the sea." And if we have not that belief, what other can we have? What other will be worth anything to us?

There is, however, another inquiry,—Why have we to complain of all this tumult and confusion, this hasting to be rich, this eagerness to outstrip and to trip up each other, these convulsions in civil governments and societies, these deeper and more fearful rendings in spiritual bodies? Why is it so hard to be still? Why is it so difficult to rest in the faith that the Lord is God? Surely because we have not believed His other words, "I will be exalted among the Heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." We sometimes think that we ought to make some great efforts to

Christianize the nations, to put down the false worships which are defiling the earth. But we cannot satisfy ourselves *what* efforts we are to make; whether we should hold out some rewards to those who will embrace our faith, whether we should do anything to render the profession of another faith disagreeable, if not penal, whether we shall merely continue to argue in support of our own convictions, as we have done hitherto with so little effect, whether we should trust to the gradual influences of knowledge and civilization, which have apparently worked no moral change in those whom they have reached, which leave the mass of the people utterly undisturbed in their superstitions.

My brethren, if we have no faith that the God Whom we worship does design to exalt Himself among the Heathen, to exalt Himself in the earth, if we do not think that He is working to bring men out of darkness to light, out of communion with evil beings to communion with His Own truth, it seems to me that we must despair of one of these methods as much as the other. For us to expect that our skilful arguments, our machinery, religious or political, will shake the belief of ages, for us to think that we worms can exalt Him Whom we proclaim to be the Lord of Heaven and Earth,—what vanity, what madness is this! What restlessness there must be in the struggle! what despair in the issue! But if we verily and in our hearts believe that every glimpse of knowledge we possess respecting the Living God has been His

gift, if we think that we are not bowing to stocks and stones, because He has redeemed the world of which we are members, and has sent His Spirit to guide us out of falsehood into truth,—if we recollect that those who preached His Gospel to the Heathen —who preached it to us—lived, fought, died in the faith that they were His servants, and not their own, that they were simply fulfilling His will,—if this is our faith, we may get rid of some of those questions which are disturbing us, at once, we may look much more steadily and hopefully at those which remain. Penalties and persecutions may be advisable means of enforcing the religions which we desire to extirpate. If we want to convert men to the worship of a Destroyer, in his name let us destroy. Bribes are admirable means for tempting men to certain kinds of service. If we confess Mammon to be the God of the English, in his name let us scatter promises, gifts, offices, among Hindoos and Mussulmans. We shall not be disappointed; with such inducements they will press in crowds to *that* altar.

If, again, we aspire to exalt a God who shall be a negation of all the gods to which Heathens are now doing service,—if we wish to take from them all the trust and hopes which they have, let us spend our time in arguing with them about their follies and confusions, in scoffing at all which they reverence. We shall have our reward in that effort too. Experience justifies us in anticipating it. We shall turn idolaters into atheists.

But if we do believe the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Lord, if we worship and adore Him Who is revealed to us at the Cross, then I say the proclamation of that God is still the instrument now, as it was of old, for putting down the false, for establishing the true, for scattering the darkness, for gathering in all the rays that are dispersed in the midst of it. The preacher, who can only make a feeble, hopeless fight against the devil while he regards him as indeed the Lord of the Universe, will strike deadly-pressing blows when he assures himself that he is going forth in the name of the real Lord, to beat down a usurper whose head is bruised already. He will tell the Heathen how God is speaking to them, acting upon them, turning them to Himself. In calmness and stillness he will be able to perceive how everything about him, which seems most to contradict God, indeed is bearing witness of Him. All His Own works, all the works of men's hands, all science, all ignorance, all sorrow, all sin, all death, will bring in such arguments as no man's wit could ever devise. He will hear every hill and grove and idol temple echoing with the words, "Know that I am God. I will be exalted among the Heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

And if you say, "This is for the preacher. But cannot the statesman, the soldier, the collector, cooperate?" Yes, indeed, he can. Let each one say in his own heart, "I for myself do not worship the

Destroyer, the Money God, the God that is the negation of all other gods. I worship Him Whom Jesus revealed. In my quiet thoughts, in my open acts, I will do Him homage. I mean to show in my earthly dealings, as much as in my words concerning invisible things, that I renounce all Lords but Him. I mean to bear witness of Him as the Friend of all men, as the Deliverer of all men, by my justice in asserting right, in punishing wrong, Christians and despisers of Christianity, by my sympathy with human beings, by my zeal to deliver them from all fetters which hinder them from being righteous and brave and noble and free, as God would have them be. And because I find myself tempted to speak lies and act lies, apt to become in essentials like these poor idolaters, therefore will I ask that God Whom I serve to exalt Himself in my heart, to reign over me. Therefore will I ask Him, by that Spirit of Truth and Freedom and Unity which He has promised, to overcome the spirits of Falsehood, of Slavery, of Division, which have led these idolaters captive, and may too lead us captive as much as them." I say, Let the statesmen, soldiers, servants of all kinds to the Queen of England, in lands where Heathens dwell, take up this language, form this resolution. The Gospel asks nothing more of them than that. God asks nothing more from them than that. He will exalt Himself in the earth. We have only to ask that He will not let us strive to exalt ourselves, or any vile thing, into His holy place.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

March 14, 1858.

GALATIANS VI. 2.

"BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, AND SO FULFIL THE LAW OF CHRIST."

THE phrase, 'It is a law of our nature that we should do such or such a thing,' is one which a certain class of writers are never weary of repeating. Often they mean almost nothing by it; they resort to it as a convenient method of disguising their ignorance, or of giving solemnity to an empty truism, or of persuading themselves that they have discovered a principle, when they are only generalizing from some narrow and imperfect experience. Sometimes a fact is announced which is of real worth; a tendency not merely of individuals in particular circumstances and positions, but of human beings everywhere; and yet the expression which is used to denote it is a misleading one. The fact may deserve the greatest possible attention; an acquaintance with the tendency may be a great and essential element of our self-know-

ledge; but it may not deserve to be called a Law; there may be some controlling or counteracting principle which claims that title by a much older creation.

Thus, for instance, a great many people seem to have convinced themselves, that when they strive one against another, which shall possess the greatest amount of money, or of the good things which money procures, they are obeying a necessary and eternal law, one which they cannot resist or transgress without ceasing to be men. You will hear it continually assumed that this strife and contention is just as much the principle which determines the movements of human society, as gravitation is the principle which determines the movements of natural bodies; that it is just as ridiculous to complain of the perpetual jostling of men against each other, with all the sorrow and misery which it causes to thousands and tens of thousands, as to be angry that water does not flow up instead of down a hill. By violent efforts, it is said, under some strange, irregular influence, the ordinary course of men's feelings may for a time be changed—even reversed. But only a fanatic would think of making these irregular influences normal; only a madman would reconstitute the universe upon a dream. In some other planet, it is added, where the inhabitants are not men, but beings of quite a different race and propensities, a better principle than this of universal rivalry may exist. But all the energy and purpose of *our* life would be lost if

this mighty stimulus were withdrawn. If the Mammon we worship demands a costly amount of human sacrifices, there is a compensation in the benefits he bestows upon us.

Now, that the tendency which these reasoners speak of exists in the nature of every man whatsoever,—that it works most strongly in the man who has most activity, most of all the qualities which Society requires in its members,—that no circumstances which we can create or conceive of will extinguish it—I believe is undoubtedly true. And I believe a man owes much to those who keep him in mind of this fact, who say to him, "Be assured this desire of being first yourself, this inclination to trip up your neighbour, is in you now, will be in you always. Change your place, your mode of life, every influence which seems to you to have begotten or nourished it, and you will have it still. When you fancy it is dead, and are acting upon that supposition, you shall see it starting up with greater freshness than ever. Social arrangements will not put an end to it: if they aim at such a result, there is great fear that they will weaken the individual energies of those for whom they are formed, and will be, after all, what the most ingenious social arrangements were said to be by the old sage, mere spider-webs, which entangle the weaker insects, and which the stronger break through. Education will not put an end to it; so far as it awakens the faculties, and gives them greater elasticity and

freedom, this disposition to outrun others, to grasp what they have, to assert mastery over them, will be also awakened." These observations, however we may shrink from them as disagreeable, are, it seems to me, true, and therefore should not be concealed from ourselves or from others.

But to boast, when we have made them, that we have proclaimed the *law* by which men are bound together as members of a commonwealth, is surely of all extravagant pretensions the most monstrous. We have been fortunate enough to perceive something which *hinders* them from living and working together, —something which induces each man to interfere with the actions and purposes of his fellow-man,—something that has been the secret of hostility in past time, and threatens to make that hostility perpetual. But who does not see that if you have lighted upon so strange and perplexing a fact in the order of the world, you are bound to show how Society has gone on in spite of it? The more vigour you attribute to this selfish rivalry—the more manifold you find its workings to be—the more you are bound to explain to yourself how it has been possible for human beings to exist together under such a condition. You must seek for some principle of cohesion which has been able to withstand this tremendous principle of repulsion; and you must confess, if you are a reasonable man, that that principle, however it may have been transgressed, however imperfectly it

may have been acknowledged, is in truth the law of the Universe, the law which all human laws and schemes of government implicately confess, when they appear most to set it at naught.

You may fancy that when I speak thus I am trying to convince you that Religion, or, as it is sometimes called still more vaguely, *the Religious Principle*, has been necessary for the conservation of society, and is necessary for it still. But there is much confusion and mischief, I fear, lurking in the use of such language. It may mean that Religion prevents a society from perishing, which has selfishness for its root, and which would naturally fall to pieces if it had not some supernatural power, or the dream of some supernatural power, to keep it together. Such a religion statesmen have unquestionably been desirous of, and priests have been found ready to supply them with it. But if by Religion be meant the Gospel of Christ in a living, practical sense, it declines such an honour altogether. It does not exist to keep men comfortable in their contradictions, or to avert the consequences of them. It exists as a perpetual witness against those contradictions, and a perpetual prophecy of the result which must come from them. A society which has reached the point of confessing no principle but that of rivalry, no maxim but that of 'Every man for himself,' may in its dying agonies ask help of the Gospel—but assuredly too late. What can it do to save a community which has been deli-

berately, systematically, setting aside its first and most notorious precepts,—which has pronounced the principle, my text announces, to be no foundation of human life at all, but only an excuse for pretty sentences in commendation of charity and gentleness such as preachers deliver, and which it is respectable to listen to for a few minutes on a Sunday? No! Religion, or the Religious Principle, if it is worth anything,—if it is not another name for the worship of the God of this world, of the Evil Spirit,—cannot be the instrument of preventing or even delaying that destruction which the Righteous and True God has pronounced against all unrighteousness and untruth.

Either the Gospel declares what Society is, and what it is not; what binds men together, what separates them, or it has no significance at all. Either it shows how a uniting principle may be an effectual, living principle,—how those tendencies which lead to separation may be overcome,—or it fails to do what it professes. For the Bible does not accept that position which men have courteously assigned it. It does not profess to provide rules or comforts for men as individuals, and to leave their condition as portions of a Community out of its calculations. It speaks from first to last of a Kingdom. It promulgates a social Law. It tells all men that this is the law which makes communion among men possible; that there is positively no other.

In my text St. Paul bids the Galatians fulfil the

law of Christ. Does he mean the law which Christ laid down when He opened His mouth and spake, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven"? Undoubtedly he does mean that. But what did that mean? Did our Lord announce certain grave and excellent precepts, which He, being a wise and celestial teacher, had perceived by a large experience or an excellent intuition to be very desirable for human creatures? Or was He publishing a new Decalogue, to be enforced by new and more terrible sanctions? Or was it the law which His Father in heaven had formed all His human, intelligent, voluntary creatures to obey, just as much as He had formed mere natural creatures to obey the law of gravitation? Was it not the law which was in the heart of the Son of God, which He actually fulfilled; which He declared to be the law of His disciples, because they were related to Him as the branches of a vine are related to the stem and root; because a living Spirit would be given them, that they might feel as He felt, be what He was? If the last be the account which our Lord himself gives us and the Apostle gives us of this law,—if they represent it as the original primary law, of which the Ten Commandments were a formal, external expression,—St. Paul may well say, "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*" He would have been sorry to have changed the words for "Fulfil the law of your being." Such an expression would have been far more feeble,

far less accurate, than the one he actually adopted. But it would have been nearer the truth and more consistent with his uniform language than any which should represent Christ as merely an external law-maker. He supposes Him to be the *Man*, the Lord of Man, Who shows what man truly is; Who is the true head of all human fellowship, the true source and spring of all human life. If Christ bore all men's burdens,—if He glorified not Himself,—if He took upon Him the form of a servant,—if He exhibited the chief of all as the minister of all,—this, St. Paul affirms, is the law under which we are placed, the law to which we are in conformity, so far as our acts are self-consistent and harmonious; the law which we break, every time that we yield to any selfish, separating tendency, be it ever so much rooted in our nature, be it ever so universal, be it ever so closely connected with what is good and precious, and even sacred. To bear one another's burdens, according to the Apostle, is not to act upon some sublime, heroical maxim, wholly apart from the common daily business and routine of life; it is simply to fulfil a law, simply not to break loose from the order and government under which our hearts and lives are actually constituted, simply to yield ourselves to the real Lord and Master of our spirits, Who has power to mould them according to His will, instead of choosing another service—the service of the Spirit of Division and Selfishness.

Such a view of things is undoubtedly very unlike

the one which is commonly adopted by Christians in our day, even by those who most pride themselves in the name. There is indeed a general notion that benevolence is a good and desirable quality; that it is a graceful thing, and even in some cases a needful thing, to care for others as well as ourselves. But this benevolence is represented as the beautiful capital of a pillar, which rests upon the most earthly base. It is a habit which may improve and mitigate the evils of the world, but affirms them to be radical. Or else religious people say, that to bear one another's burdens is the law of the regenerate man, but that the world generally can only follow a selfish rule. Governments must try to make that rule as efficient for keeping up good order as they can. A more hateful and accursed inference from a great truth was never suggested by the Spirit of Lies, for the purpose of undermining and making ineffectual a maxim which he dares not openly contradict. Assuredly there is this great and eternal distinction between the new and old man, the regenerate and the unregenerate. But the new man is he who consents to follow the true law of humanity which is in Christ Jesus, and so to be at one with his fellow-men; the old man is he who obeys the inclinations of his nature, and so is at war with his fellows. The law of Christ is *not* the law of a select few, but the law for man. It would be so, though all men disobeyed it; it continues so, though those who ought to proclaim the good news to their fellow-crea-

tures, that Christ has taken the nature of men, and died for men, prefer to wrap themselves up in a conceit of their own privileges, and to boast that they have been put into an extra-human, or inhuman, position. Whoever comes to think habitually that there is a different law for different classes of human creatures, will infallibly obey the lower and least troublesome law in his own ordinary practice. For his distinction is grounded on this knowledge, that two principles are contending in himself, and if he once believes that the good principle is his own, for which he can, under any pretext, take credit to himself, he will fall under the dominion of the evil. He will, in all his dealings with other men, act upon the low notions which he supposes are the only notions they can understand or recognize; he will not make good his claim to be regenerate and different from these men by bearing their burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ, but by the most arrogant contempt and bitter judgment of them. A Christian man must believe that the law of Christ is applicable to all persons and all cases, or he will very soon apply it really and practically to no persons and in no cases. He must acknowledge it as the human law, or it certainly will not be the law of his church, or circle, or caste; he must believe that it lies at the root of all politics and of all daily business, or he will not make it the guide of his individual conduct, not even of his most sacred and solemn transactions.

There is another way in which this general application of the principle is often evaded by good men. They think that Christ is to come some day to restore the world and set all right, but that in the meantime Society is to be left to take its course, and to follow what evil maxims it chooses for itself. That Christ will one day be the acknowledged Ruler of this earth, and of all that dwell on it, no one who calls Him Lord and Master can bear to doubt. "I should utterly have fainted," says the Psalmist, "if I had not verily believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living." No man who feels the oppressions of the world, and tries to bear up against them, can help utterly fainting, if he does not verily believe that this earth shall not always be a den of robbers, but that its true Saviour and Helper shall Himself purge it and restore it. But the men of old were able verily to believe this truth; because they verily believed, in their own day, that the universe was not the Devil's but God's, and because they set themselves manfully to fight in that conviction against those who said it was the Devil's, and tried to make it so, we must do the same. If this law of bearing one another's burdens is not the law by which all things and all men are governed now, it never will be. Our faith in its future establishment rests wholly on our belief in its present truth. And if it is true, then must we desire Him Who has fulfilled it in His own life to fulfil it in all the Members of His body.

This then is our position, brethren. We see Society dragged along by that mighty power of competition which wise men commend, and declare to be the sovereign principle in the universe. We see some of the men who obey this impulse, exhibiting admirable zeal and energy, a zeal and energy in vanquishing circumstances which we hold to be worthy of all imitation and all cultivation. But we see that they do not after all wholly obey this impulse; that they are not merely selfish, that they are members of families, of social circles, in which, to a certain extent, yes, to a very considerable extent, they act upon the rule, "Bear ye one another's burdens."

And we see another sight which is more appalling. We see oftentimes their sons exhibiting very little of their strength, hardly any of their domestic feelings, yet thoroughly possessed by their doctrine. They desire to be before others, but the desire is not making them painstaking, thrifty pursuers of fortune. They covet to be rich, and they become gamblers. They will take what seems to them the shortest road to riches, heedless, of course, of all warnings, that it is a road full of pits, in which thousands are lost, while one gets his reward and finds it to be a wretched reward. You are not then really stirring up that enterprise, that hope, which you say, and say rightly, is so essential to a nation's strength and well-being. You are producing men who are restless today, will be listless tomorrow; pursuers of phantoms, often

ugly phantoms, for awhile; indifferent, disappointed, heartless loungers, when they have missed the prize. Must you not make an effort to recover that which competition cannot give, if you will obtain any one of its advantages? Must you not try to strengthen the bonds of sympathy which it is threatening? Must not the thought of providing for others besides ourselves, for those who shall live when we are in our graves, be in some way awakened? But that thought has its ground in the law which binds men together, not in the law which sets them one against another. That is a lower exhibition of the law which is expounded in the text, the law which was fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

I have owned, brethren, that we have no right to reproach any other men—merchants, shopkeepers, lawyers—for thinking the world's law mightier and more generally applicable than the Divine law. We, the ministers of the Gospel, have most to answer for. We have sanctioned this unbelief. We have acted upon it. The Church ought to uphold the national life, the family of England, by its prayers, its confessions, its Sacraments. We have spoken of these prayers, confessions, Sacraments, as if they were themselves instruments and abettors of the selfish law, as if there was no force in them which could enable us to obey the other law. Oh! that this Lent we might repent all together, you and we, of the sin of such unfaithfulness! Oh that we might, each for himself,

knowing the plague of his own heart, and also with one heart and voice, own that we have not borne each other's burdens, and so fulfilled the law of Christ! Oh that we may indeed feel that His yoke is the easy yoke, and that we have put on ourselves the heavy one! Oh that we may come to Christ's Holy Sacrament, believing that He can feed us with the flesh and make us drink of the blood which He gave for the world, when He bore all our burdens; that He can quicken us with His Spirit, to bear each other's burdens!

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

March 21, 1858.

MATTHEW III. 12.

"WHOSE FAN IS IN HIS HAND, AND HE WILL THROUGHLY PURGE HIS FLOOR, AND GATHER HIS WHEAT INTO THE GARNER, BUT HE WILL BURN UP THE CHAFF WITH UNQUENCHABLE FIRE."

WHEN we compare John the Baptist with the Lord whose way he was sent to prepare, we commonly dwell upon the severity of the first, the graciousness of the second. The servant, we say, stood apart from the world,—the Master freely entered into it. The one we describe as a righteous Reprover,—the other as a merciful Saviour; John, as condemning men for their sins,—Jesus, as bringing them forgiveness for sin.

Whatever truth there may be in this opinion, it seems greatly at variance with the words I have just read to you. There John the Baptist is speaking expressly of Christ. And he does not say, "My words are of a terrific, consuming quality; His will be all grace and gentleness." But he says, "I baptize with

water; He will baptize with fire. I preach repentance; He will throughly purge His floor, and burn up the chaff." The contrast seems to be put just in the other way to that in which we put it. The forerunner is sent to save men from an impending ruin. He of whom he speaks is coming clothed with a commission and power to destroy.

I think, my brethren, that it is very needful for us to examine this subject carefully. It may be that we have never seriously considered what it is that men need from a King and Deliverer; and how it is that the Christ, whom we confess, has satisfied their needs.

You will see that the different parts of John the Baptist's discourse are at least consistent. He denounces the Scribes and Pharisees as men whose faith was upon the surface. They said they had Abraham to their father. He tells them, and all, that the axe is now laid to the root of the tree. He says that the Teacher, whose shoes he is not worthy to stoop down and unloose, will baptize with a Spirit which will go down into the depths of human hearts. His own work, he is convinced, is to tear off veils; to show men to themselves as they are; often to reverse their relation to each other; to level the hills and exalt the valleys. He cannot do this work radically and effectually. He can but awaken the self-righteous man to think whether he is righteous at all; whether he is not at the greatest distance from righteousness. Another than he must drive that conviction home;

Another than he must look into the man's own very self, and make him feel that he is detected. He was sent to awaken the consciences of men to a sense that they were wrong. He must leave the process of making them right in different hands. What he declares then is that the Discoverer of wrong,—the Restorer of right,—is at hand, and is about to make Himself manifest. If there was no such a one; if there was no guide and ruler of men's thoughts and purposes, no inspirer of good, no condemner of evil, he felt he had nothing to hope for, nothing which he could bid his country hope for. If there was no such a one, there was no Christ: all that their Prophets had told them was a delusion.

If a king were coming, such as the Pharisees hoped for,—a king who should give their sect predominance,—the Desire of Nations would prove to be another of those tyrants from whom the world had been groaning to be delivered. But if He was not this, He must be the very reverse of this. He must come sifting, overturning, burning. No symbols could denote Him so fitly as these: "His fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge his floor."

The Jew, who was so familiar with emblems of this kind in the Prophets, would understand that the House of Israel was in some sense the threshing-floor which John the Baptist spoke of. Any Scribe would have been ready to translate the language for him. That is to say, the Scribe would have translated simple

and direct language, as dictionaries do, into abstract and difficult language. The threshing-floor was a living image, obvious to the sense. By watching and studying the operations that went on there, the dullest peasant might arrive at some apprehension of the teacher's meaning; at least he would have discovered that there was a meaning to be apprehended. The Scribe would stifle the peasant's mind, as he had stifled his own, with a mere book-phrase. The threshing-floor did signify the House of Israel in some sense; but in what sense? The man who had heard the Baptist's call to repentance knew, or was beginning to know. He was sure that by the House of Israel was not intended a mere crowd, a mass of people living within certain geographical boundaries. He was sure that the message was not to a multitude, but to *him*. The Kingdom of Heaven was near *him*. *He* was to turn round to God. *He* was to look for One whose axe was at the root of the tree; whose fan was in His hand. His heart, his inner being, was part of the threshing-floor, the part with which, at that moment, he had most need to concern himself. If he did concern himself with it, the effect was not that he became more separated from the people among whom he dwelt, that he understood less what it was to belong to a house or family. Then first the force of the fact, the greatness of the privilege, unfolded itself to him. As the hidden springs of his life were opened, as he became aware that the evil which he had

seen in his fellows was in himself,—as the thought dawned upon him that the Lord, who was described in the Scriptures as caring for the children of Abraham, was not indifferent about him,—he felt a little of what it was to be the member of a nation which God had called out to know His name. To have Him so near them might be very terrible: Moses had said that it was. But blessing and terror must be wonderfully associated. Was it possible to be truly a man without this privilege? Had he ever known anything of himself, of his own mysterious existence, till he had this glimpse of One who was overlooking him, calling him to account for his acts and his thoughts, meeting with him, judging him?

The Israelite was taking the benefit of his covenant when he was understanding this great human privilege. As long as he was looking for some outward glory, some outward deliverance, he was but like the nations round about, an idolater, and an idolater of the hardest, driest kind. Only when he acknowledged an invisible Sower and Husbandman, who had taken his whole inner being under His culture, who was working continually in him that he might bring forth fruits worthy of the divine seed; only when he believed that this Sower and Husbandman was acting upon a Society of men, a House of Israel,—even as He was acting upon him, a member of that Society and House,—that it might be a witness of God's Wisdom and Righteousness and Mercy to mankind;

only when he expected a more complete revelation of that Wisdom and Righteousness and Mercy than had yet been granted to him; only when he desired that it should have this effect upon himself and upon all his brethren, of separating the true from the false, the chaff from the wheat, did he at all enter into the history of his people, or claim to be an inheritor of the treasures which their fathers had received.

First of all, the disciples of John were to learn that their hearts were under another tillage and cultivation than their own. The seeds which entered into them were not self-sown; they could not bring them to life; they could not even by their own art hinder the birds of the air from flying away with them, or the weeds from choking them. They were subordinate husbandmen; but the harvest depended on their submission to the chief Husbandman,—on their not thwarting His plans by theirs. And as it was with the field, so was it with the floor to which the produce was carried after it had been reaped. They could not winnow it; they could not separate corn from chaff. If there was no one more skilful than they were to do that, the labour had been thrown away; the corn would not supply bread to the eater or seed to the sower.

Next, they were to be sure that this discipline, if it was indeed divine discipline, would be thorough. "*He will throughly purge his floor.*" The processes would not be insincere or indulgent, like those which

we invent, when we pretend to search ourselves or correct ourselves, or like those of friendly admonishers, who often mix fresh chaff of their own with that which needs to be removed, and sometimes leave those whom they desire to help in greater doubt what in them is wheat and what chaff.

Thirdly. Those who heard John speak, and understood him, must have received two lessons, at first sight inconsistent. They must have been sure that He who was conducting that sifting discipline, of which the prophet testified, over them and over the whole nation, was the Lord of the spirits of all flesh; He who had revealed Himself in times past to their fathers by the Prophets. And yet they were told of a man standing among them, who claimed the floor as His, and would prove it to be His by purging it. John himself often found it difficult to reconcile the two assertions. But they were reconciled in the experience of those who repented at his preaching. They could not find any dominion over the thoughts and intents of their hearts real or satisfactory which was not *Divine*,—which was not exercised by Him who knows past, present, and future. They could not find any such dominion real and satisfactory which was not essentially *human*, which did not involve the knowledge that is derived from the most inward sympathy, from actual participation in their sorrows and temptations. As the thought of a God of righteousness, against whom they had sinned, was exchanged for the

thought of a God of mere power, whom they had enraged, they longed more and more, amidst all their fears and tremblings, to see Him as He is,—they became more certain that they could only see Him as He is in the life of a Man.

But again: a man merely showing them a model of excellence—how little would this have answered to the need they had experienced of One who should sway, quicken, renovate the motions of their spirit! A baptism with the Spirit, the gift of a power to dwell in them and with them, to overcome that in them which was corrupt, partial, solitary; to make them the possessors of Truth as well as its subjects; to make them fellow-workers with God and with men; this was the promise to which all John's words pointed: this was the baptism for which his own was the preparation. If there was no one who could impart this baptism, his had been in vain.

This baptism, however, was no merely gracious gift. It was connected with a judgment,—a judgment awaiting each man and the whole land. Must not John's converts have often desired that it might be averted; that they at least might escape it? They will have had this desire, but not in the truest moments of their lives, when they were really turning from evil and cleaving to good. At all times, no doubt, they would long that the fires should not utterly destroy their nation; they might be confident that it would in some way come through them. At

all times they would pray that they might pass safely through them. But they could not pray that the fire should not be real and mighty, or that it should be quenched by any mere pity for those who were the subjects of it. Least of all could they pray that they might not bear what their fellow-men bore; that the land might suffer its sentence, and they might stand aloof, untouched and unfeeling. The dread of such a state of mind will have been ever present to them. The possibility of being stupid, careless spectators of the calamity which visited their nation will have seemed to them the most terrible of all possibilities, the greatest sign of a divine curse, the proof that they were receiving none of the blessings which the great Deliverer had come to confer.

I have been careful, my brethren, to take these words literally. If John the Baptist had said, "The Christ is about now to accomplish a great work of salvation; thousands of years hence he will come again to gather the wheat into His garner, and to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,"—I should have followed his teaching and applied it accordingly. But he leaves us no excuse for such a paraphrase. He describes this as the immediate work—the great work—of the Divine Word, Who was coming after him, and had been before him. When he sent his disciples, at a later day, to ask whether Jesus of Nazareth was He that should come, or whether they were to look for another, he must have meant them

to use this test :—"Is He doing what I said He would do? Is He gathering the wheat into His garner, and burning up the chaff?" And whatever the disciples or John himself may have thought of our Lord's answer, I believe it did accept this test, and was founded upon it. "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear; to the poor the Gospel is preached." The Son of Man was by all these acts fulfilling this character. He was gathering wheat into His garner. That which had been thought worthless by others, fit only to be thrown aside as good for nothing, He was sifting, separating from the accidents which had made it look contemptible in the world's eyes, claiming as a treasure for Himself. The most beggarly human body was recognized as having the stamp of His creative wisdom and love upon it. What had brought it into decay and death was an intruding element, which had nothing to do with the true and proper substance. That He vindicated and redeemed; the other fled at his word. And that gospel to poor men's hearts which He preached, not only with His lips to multitudes, but also by each of those acts of individual grace and compassion, had precisely the same object and the same effect. It claimed every human heart, the most wretched, as God's; as a subject of His care and husbandry. It invited every human heart to trust in Him and yield to His discipline. And it made each human heart conscious of a vanity, self-sufficiency, slavery, which

hindered it from exercising this trust, which made it restless and impatient under this discipline. The more His voice was listened to, the more its loving power was felt and confessed, the more He separated the wheat from the chaff; the more He taught that the union between them was temporary, unnatural, that the one was sentenced to destruction, and that Christ sought to gather the other into His barn.

It is the same in His discourses with the Apostles. They tell us how full their minds were of the poorest, vulgarest notions and motives; how the Scriptures bewildered them; how Christ's own discourses often bewildered them. They speak of the hardness and stupidity of their hearts; how little impression signs left upon them; how the occurrences of today obliterated the lesson of yesterday. They could see afterwards what a process they were passing through at this time; how wonderfully He was winnowing the chaff from the wheat. But they felt equally, and they make us feel, how little mere words, even though they were His words, could accomplish this object. They had to pass through the fires of desertion, sense of insincerity, sense of cowardice, self-contempt. They had to see their Lord taken from them, and all their hopes cast from heaven to hell, before they could be the heralds of a risen Lord and a divine hope. And when they were called to that work, and endued with power to fulfil it, the baptism of fire with which their Master had also been baptized came along with

the baptism of His Spirit, and they who were the messengers of peace to the world, were charged, not falsely, with turning it upside down; they themselves became the offscouring of all things, spectacles to angels and men.

And so we understand that other part of our Lord's discourses which is often supposed to be of a different tenour and spirit from the rest,—that in which He denounces the Scribes and Pharisees, and asks them plainly how they expected to escape the damnation of hell. Their pride and self-righteousness and exclusiveness, their belief that they were the wheat of the land, and that the people were mere chaff which the wind would carry away, their utterly false conceptions of God, as if He were like them, hard-hearted, grudging, self-seeking, their determination that their countrymen should only be fed upon the husks of an outward religion, and therefore their growing incapacity to feed upon anything else themselves,—the absolute confusion of good and evil which was implied in the thought that good and gracious acts could proceed from a bad spirit,—these were the heaviest calamities that could have overtaken them; if they continued in this state of mind, they must be shut out from God's presence, shut up in their own selfishness. These burning discourses are the expressions of that indignation which He who loves perfectly cherishes, and must ever cherish, for that which is contrary to love. They show us in some degree what that unquenchable fire is, in

which all that is base and inhuman and false must be consumed. They show us that if it could be quenched God's love must be quenched. And therefore they show us how great the danger and the sin is, of making those words which speak of this fire arguments to ourselves, or to any one else, for not trusting that love to the uttermost; for not believing that it encompasses us and all creation. This wall of fire is around us. Oh! let us acknowledge Who has built it, and let us desire that it may do its work, for us and for the Universe!

I have spoken of John the Baptist's words as fulfilled at once, when Jesus Christ came in the flesh. I believe they have been fulfilling themselves in every age since He ascended on high. In every age, men who have been led to discover their own great necessities, have asked indeed for one who should *forgive* their sins; but quite as earnestly, and without being able to separate the two petitions, for one who should *destroy* their sins, who should put an everlasting barrier between that in them which they knew to be their enemy, often their triumphant enemy, and that which cleaved to a Friend, and sought fellowship with Him, likeness to Him. They have felt that that was not a Gospel which did not speak of this separation, that He was not the Christ who did not desire it for them, and work in them to effect it. They have been sure that when they have held fast to any evil, suicidal habit, or to any one which set them at war with other

men, they were resisting a mighty power which was seeking to break in pieces their chains, and to make them one. They have learnt to welcome sufferings, when they found that they were designed for this object. The fires were good, which denoted that they were baptized with the Spirit, and that He would not leave them till He had made them what they were created to be. And so, too, the course of History and the trials of nations interpret themselves. As long as there is any strength, vitality, faith in a people, so long is there wheat which Christ will assuredly gather into His garner; and so long that nation will be subjected to frequent fires, that its chaff, all its untruth and baseness and heartlessness, may be burnt up. Nay, it may be said always to be in such fires, for the time of our wealth, as well as the time of our tribulation, is a searching time. That is the time in which it is hardest for us to separate the chaff from the wheat, and therefore in which we have most need to recollect that there is a Lord who is doing it, and will do it thoroughly.

That the chaff in God's Universal Church, and in every particular portion of it, may be thoroughly burnt up, we ask every time that we say our Litany, or the Lord's Prayer. If once we begin to think that there is not this chaff in our own Church, and that it does not need to be burnt up, we sink into the condition of the Scribes and Pharisees; we prove how near we must be to a most penetrating and consuming fire.

And therefore it is a strange doctrine, which some Christians and some infidels conspire in circulating, that we ought to be full of dread when any of our opinions are assailed, or any of our wrong-doings are detected. "Take care"—this is the meaning of the hint which different benevolent advisers address to us,—"you are in a tottering house; let one brick fall away, and the whole may be in ruins sooner than you know." If we are in a tottering house,—if it is one that is built on the sand,—Christ's words oblige us to believe that it must fall, and ought to fall; none of our schemes can save it—He will frustrate them. But if our house is standing upon Him, and therefore upon a rock, we know that though we cannot discover what wood, hay, or stubble we have introduced into it, He will, and will burn them up. And therefore we must tell our friends that they have mistaken the matter altogether; that they are urging us to a course of conduct, *because* we are Christians, which if we were *not* Christians would be sagacious and reasonable. If there is no Christ, it is wisdom to keep together all the notions and superstitions of today, because, if we parted with them, they will only be succeeded by another and perhaps worse set of notions and superstitions tomorrow. But because we believe in Christ, who came into the world with a fan in His hand and has been using it ever since for purging His floor, we are certain that He will not suffer one falsehood to dwell beside His eternal Truth. We are certain

that He will go on winnowing and threshing till every grain of wheat—every good thought, desire, and hope in any man's heart—is gathered into His garner, and is acknowledged to have come from seed which He planted; till all the chaff which has been mixed with it in this world, whether it be the chaff of religious notions, of philosophical conceits, or of ordinary selfishness and fleshly lusts, is divided from it, and is cast into the unquenchable fire.

Sunday before Easter.

March 28, 1858.

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1 CORINTHIANS v. 7, 8.

"FOR EVEN CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US: THEREFORE LET US KEEP THE FEAST, NOT WITH OLD LEAVEN, NEITHER WITH THE LEAVEN OF MALICE AND WICKEDNESS; BUT WITH THE UNLEAVENED BREAD OF SINCERITY AND TRUTH."

THIS is one of the texts for Easter Day. It may seem scarcely fit for the beginning of Passion Week. But Passion Week is the preparation for Easter. If we would utter these words aright on the Festival of Christ's Resurrection, we must have thought on them and learnt to understand them in that time which speaks of His Agony and His Cross. The more simply we take the words, the better; the depth and wonder is not in our way of interpreting them, not even in themselves, but in the fact and in the Person they speak of.

1. It is the Person to Whom St. Paul, firstly and chiefly, here and always, directs the minds of his disciples. He does not say, the death of Christ is that which corresponds to the sacrifice of the lamb;

or that one sacrifice is the type of the other. But he says broadly, "*Christ* our Passover is sacrificed for us." The difference may seem a shadowy or unimportant one. I believe we shall find, in our own practice, that there is the distance of a whole Heaven between the one form of speech and the other. There is room for all possible ingenuity and subtlety in detecting resemblances between that which we read in the Old Testament and in the New. But there is infinite danger that the reality of the first as well as of the second may disappear through that very ingenuity. The noble, practical history of the old Fathers may become a visionary picture, a mere likeness or adumbration of that which we believe to be all-important for ourselves. We may cease to think that the Israelites did actually come out of Egypt,—that they actually slew a lamb,—that they actually ate unleavened bread of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, because they were thrust out and could not tarry, neither had they prepared themselves any victuals. All this plain, homely narrative may become offensive to our refined tastes, which crave for something that they call spiritual, and that is unsubstantial. And then, by an inevitable and just retribution, the later and deeper truth, for the sake of which we have destroyed the earlier and more obvious one, becomes also impalpable and indefinite. The simple histories of the Passion which we are reading this week, cannot be taken just as they are. A re-

fining process must be practised on them too; they must be spiritualized till they become mere mist and vapour,—till they represent only certain feelings and experiences, often very morbid feelings and experiences, of our own minds. Or if we shun this course, which is chiefly attractive to tempers of a fanciful and sentimental cast, we may adopt one which is more hard and quite as unsatisfactory. The history may be turned into a set of dogmas. It is not what our Lord did or spoke that we consider, but what the effects of His doings and His speech were, according to a certain scheme of divinity. It is not He Whom we contemplate, but a theory about Him.

But it is He Whom the Apostle wishes us to contemplate. The Gospel with which he tells the Romans he was entrusted, was a Gospel "concerning Jesus Christ, Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." It is a Gospel concerning a Person, not a Gospel concerning a notion, or consisting of notions. Christ, he tells the same Church, is the end of the Law for righteousness to them that believe. They obtain the righteousness which the Law requires them to obtain,—but which it cannot confer,—by trusting in a Person, in Whom the righteousness dwells livingly, and in Whom it is livingly manifested. Jesus Christ crucified, he tells the Corinthians, is the subject of his preaching, not some fine system of dogmas

by which he was distinguished from Cephas or Apollos. Christ was the foundation, he says, on which they were built, not any one of His teachers, not the maxims or doctrines which they taught. Jesus Christ, he tells the Galatians, was revealed in him, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. He went forth to declare, not some new or higher religion to those Gentiles, but to tell them Who it was that had revealed Himself as the Lord of his spirit, and was the Lord of theirs. In writing to the Ephesians, he blesses the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. A Person, and not a notion, he declares to be the ground of this eternal spiritual constitution; a Person, and not a notion, to be the bond of the spiritual and universal society of Jews and Gentiles, which could only be established when this constitution was manifested by the appearing of Christ in the flesh. The mind which he prays may be in the Philippians, was the mind which was in Jesus Christ,—the mind which actually dwelt in Him Who humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant,—not some ideal mind, some possible or imaginary excellence which had never been embodied. In Christ, he wishes the Colossians to know, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; in Him they were complete, Who is

the head of all principalities and powers; in Him they were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands; they were buried with Him in baptism, wherein also they had risen with Him, through faith in the operation of God, Who had raised Him from the dead. The relation was a real one, to as real a Being as any with whom they claimed relationship on earth. The simple sign of baptism expressed how living, and actual, and spiritual, and eternal a relation it was. The effect of his preaching to the Thessalonians, he tells them, was, that they turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and waited for His Son from Heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. They received the news of One Who had revealed the living and true Being, His Father and their Father, Who had saved them from wrath. They looked and waited for a revelation of Him as a Person; nothing else would have been any comfort in their sorrows, or satisfaction to the deepest cravings of their hearts.

I give you these examples to prove that St. Paul is not departing from the usual style of his preaching, but is exactly conforming to it, when he says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," instead of saying, as we should have perhaps said, "The antitype of the Paschal Lamb has now appeared;" or "that which was denoted and dimly foretold in the outward and temporary arrangements of the Jewish Dispensation,

—the remission of sins, and restoration to the Divine favour,—is now perfectly brought out in the Christian scheme." The awful name, Christ, the Anointed One, supplies the place, in St. Paul's letters, of all this vague and cumbrous terminology.

2. And yet, surely, he says all that this multitude of words can say; for he adds, Christ "our *Passover*." In that one word he gathers up whatever were the meanings and associations of that Festival,—all that the different parts of it expressed to the mind of the Jew,—the whole course of Divine history, from the call of Abraham to the time when the Voice said, "This is He in Whom I am well pleased." The Passover expressed the deliverance of the first-born of the Israelites, and their consecration to God. It expressed the distinction between them and the Egyptians. It expressed the destruction of oppressors and the redemption of slaves. It expressed the leaving the fleshpots of Egypt for the dreariness of the Wilderness, and the hope of the Promised Land. It expressed humiliation and sorrow. It expressed thankfulness and victory. It expressed the fact that they were under a Divine government, and that they were not under a visible tyrant. As they looked beyond its first institution to the subsequent history, the loss of it was connected with every great relapse into idolatry, and with the divisions and slavery which followed. The restoration of it was connected with every great religious reformation, with the destruction of high

places and Moloch feasts, with the recollection that God's Covenant was with the Land from generation to generation. All these different aspects of the Festival gathered around the one centre of the Lamb. It was his blood which was sprinkled upon the door-posts of the house when the Destroying Angel passed by,—which was the symbol of the entire deliverance. It was the eating of the lamb which was the main business of the Feast: every other command was accessory to this; it was this which reminded them that they formed distinct families and that they formed a whole nation; it was this which brought men from all parts of the earth where they might be scattered, to Jerusalem.

3. "Christ *our* Passover," says St. Paul; ours who are of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and ours who are grafted into the same stock with them. He signifies all that ever the Passover signified; but the signification is for the whole human family, not for one portion of it. He was the first-born among many brethren. He was devoted, consecrated to God, as the representative of a whole race or family. He declared the true distinction between the flesh in each man, which is devoted to death, and the spirit, which is redeemed and united to God and is quickened with a new life. He claimed for man, in His own Person, deliverance from the oppressor, subjection to the invisible and gracious Ruler. He showed that the fleshly inclinations of man were indeed the prison-

house out of which he must be brought, and that his way to liberty and hope lies through a region of darkness and the shadow of death. He showed Himself to be the uniting bond of all creatures, Himself the source of their life, and that apart from Him they must be divided and dead. In all these ways He was their Passover. But every other view of His character was harmonized and concentrated in the view of Him as a Sacrifice. It was the act of giving Himself up which showed what He was; that was the great witness of His filial relation to God, of His entire delight in His Father's will. That was the witness, at the same time, of His entire identification with those whom He had made His brethren upon earth, of His refusing to be in anywise separate from them in the worst condition into which the worst of them could come, of His refusal to have any life which He would not communicate with them. Above all, it was the witness that everything which He had was His Father's, that He did nothing but what he saw His Father do, that His love was only the image and reflection of His Father's love, that the Father was the originator even of that highest and most perfect sacrifice, with which alone He could be satisfied, in which alone He could accept all other sacrifices.

4. Christ our Passover, therefore, he says, *is* sacrificed for us. The complete oblation has been made. That which is not only the consummation of all others, but the ground of all others, has now been

presented, and acknowledged by Him to Whom it was presented. Nothing more remains to be done. The atonement of God and man, of earth and heaven, has been effected. God has claimed man as His servant and child. Man, in Christ's person, has recognized God as his ruler and father. The sin of the world, the sin of self-will, of distrust, of disobedience, has been taken away. The Lamb of God has borne it with Him on the Cross, and has put it to death there. There is nothing to separate the children from their Father, seeing that He is the perfect daysman between them, in Whom they can look upon Him, in Whom He can look upon them, through Whom they can receive the Spirit, to direct them in their works upon earth, to bind them together as a family on earth, to the larger family within the veil, to enable them to present sacrifices holy and acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service.

5. St. Paul therefore says boldly, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for *us*." No one can suppose that by the word *us*, he understood the Apostles, or the Corinthians, or the men of that age exclusively. He did understand them; he must have meant to have given as much particularity and definiteness to the expression as possible. If his hearers lost the sense of their own benefit in a general notion of a benefit conferred upon the world, his whole purpose in writing to them would have been lost. But on the other hand, they would have had no apprehension of the

benefit conferred upon them, if they did not take their stand upon their general human title, if they did not confess that Christ's incarnation was His taking the nature of man, that His death was a death for man. If they in anywise confined these acts of redemption, the ground upon which they could say, "He has been sacrificed for us," would have been taken from them.

6. "*Therefore let us keep the Feast,*" the Apostle goes on. You will remark the order of his discourse: it is perhaps not what you would have expected. We are wont to speak of the Passover as the Feast, and assuredly we are warranted in doing so. St. Paul does not contradict what must have been the ordinary custom and language of his countrymen, as much as it is ours. But he wishes them to remember that the feast denoted a foregone conclusion. It spoke of a deliverance that had been effected, of the Destroying Angel having passed by, of the tyrant having been overthrown. It did not the less speak of a present Deliverer, of a King reigning over them, in each new generation. It did not the less witness that the loss of faith in that present Deliverer and King would bring discomfiture and bondage. If the Jews fancied, as many of them probably did in the time of our Lord's Incarnation, that eating the Passover was itself a meritorious act, apart from its connection with the deliverance which had been wrought out for them, and from the state into which they

had been brought,—if they fancied that it was a mere ordinance or institution, to the observance of which God had appended certain blessings or rewards,—the real grandeur of the service, which lay in its intimate union with God's acts, in the relation which it denoted between Him and His people, would certainly disappear. They would regard the Passover as a mere submission to a rule or decree; not a fulfilment of God's Covenant; not the claiming to be as near to Him as their fathers were, nearer to the accomplishment of His greatest promise. If, on the contrary, they argued, as the Sadducees probably did, that the observance of an outward service carried in it no moral worth, was a mere relic of old times, a formality which might as well be dispensed with, they arrived at the same result by a different process. So too they put God at a distance from His creatures; they set aside the belief of any living, regular, habitual communications from Him; they made morality consist in a mere punctual observance of certain precepts, or in qualities of mind which man obtained for himself, which he could congratulate himself upon, and which might either entitle him to the favour of God, or make him into a god.

St. Paul, distinguishing the Christian Feast from the Christian Sacrifice, and yet blending them so closely together, meets both these dangers. Our Passover, he says, is sacrificed for us, therefore let us

keep the Feast. Do not let us forget that a sacrifice has been offered once for all, else the feast has no meaning. It is not a Eucharist: we have nothing to give thanks for. If we are not in the fullest sense redeemed creatures, if God has not claimed us and adopted us as children, and removed the curse of separation from Him, and reconciled us to Himself and to each other,—if all this is not accomplished, then we cannot say truly that Christ is our Passover, that He is the Lamb of God. But if we forget that He lives as a continual Priest, presenting continually His sacrifice before the Father,—if we think that some one act of faith of ours in His Redemption dispenses with the continual sacrifice and devotion of ourselves to Him,—if we think that this sacrifice and devotion is to be a mere solitary act, or that it can be made in some way that we choose, or in some way that does not recognize it as a gift proceeding from God,—we merely submitting ourselves to Him and receiving His grace that we may do His will,—then we shall mistake our position as creatures, and set at naught the infinite blessings that are intended for us.

And surely, brethren, he meant us, as much as the men of any former age, to feel that we are heirs of these blessings. He did not speak of a relation established between God and man as a temporary relation, which could belong to one period or country and not to another. He did not think that Christ could be their Passover without being ours. He did not think

that the feast of which they were to eat in full assurance that the Redemption had been finished, that they were possessors of all the liberty and grace which it had wrought out, could be charged with any less meaning for those who should be passing through the world's wilderness eighteen hundred years after.

If it be a fact that Christ has died,—if all that Passion Week tells us of be not a cunningly devised fable, —we have a right to keep the great feast of His Sacrifice as a Eucharist,—to receive it as the fixed and eternal pledge of our redemption from the deepest curse, of our admission into the highest state of blessedness; that curse being nothing less than the one of separation from God and our brethren, the curse of selfishness and solitude; that blessedness being nothing less than fellowship with God and our brethren, the right and the power of casting aside all in ourselves and in the world which keeps us at a distance from either; the right and power of rising out of our own self-will, self-pleasing, self-glorification; the right and the power of becoming the witnesses and ministers and channels of God's free love to our race. Of such a redemption and such gifts, the highest that any archangel can receive, this Feast is the assurance to us. When we eat it, we are not doing a meritorious act, but renouncing all claim of merit for any of our acts; submitting simply to be receivers and entertainers of God's grace. We come confessing the desire to set up ourselves, and to claim

merit for ourselves, and all the pride, selfishness, and godlessness which have flowed from that pretension. We do not eat because we are better than those who will not eat, but because we dare not arrogate to ourselves any better position than that which the lowest of them have, because we cannot fancy that we live except by the common grace which dwells in Christ's death and life.

Passion Week is the most awful protest which human acts or divine acts can make against the notion so natural to us all, that Sacrifice consists in bringing something to God, not in giving up all to Him, as the source of every right thought and right act. Passion Week is a protest against our tendency to make distinctions between ourselves and others. He Who hung on the Cross identified Himself with the soldier who pierced His side, with the priests who wagged their heads, saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." He carried their sins; He bore their burdens. And we think that we can come to the Cross pleading that we are holier or better than some other men; that our sect or party is the way to God!

7. And this, this is the unceasing application of the last words, "Let us keep the Feast, *not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*" The Passover commemorated an accomplished deliverance, a deliverance of a whole people out of bondage, a deliverance that

lasted from generation to generation. The eating of the Lamb denoted the fulness of the Redemption. Did the eating of the unleavened bread denote something over and above this,—something which the man must do, that God's work might be more perfect? Surely not. It denoted that the man was to *abstain* from mixing with the reception of God's ordinance anything of his own. He was simply to receive and give thanks. St. Paul teaches us, Passion Week teaches us, the force and terribleness of the lesson. God's Sacraments stand not in the clearness or refinement of our thoughts about them, in our correct or incorrect judgments of their nature. They rise above all our thoughts and judgments. They are expressive of His Will. They speak of a Sacrifice offered once for all, of a complete Atonement between heaven and earth. But we would bring to these Sacraments the foul leaven of our plots, and schemes, and calculations. We would be thinking, "May this man come, or this, or this?" We would argue and debate about the quality of that which is freely given us. We would bring the quarrels of the week, the meanness of the week, the pride of the week, to God's altar, not to confess them there, not to have them killed there—but as a very preparation for eating the divine food; as a way to receive better the pledges of the universal love. This is the leaven of malice and wickedness, which makes the Sacraments of God ineffectual for renovating the condition of the Church, yea which

turns them into excuses and arguments for all its bitterest divisions and hatreds.

This malice and wickedness God desires to purge out of His Church, out of the hearts of His children. Herein lies our hope. The Sacrifice of Christ is God's Sacrifice, not our own. The Sacrament which testifies of that Sacrifice is God's, not ours. The Sacrifice of Christ is mightier than the sins of the world. The Sacrament will yet prove itself to be mightier than the malice and wickedness of the members of the Church. We may come to the Feast confessing the malice and wickedness which has been in us. God will not send us empty away. He Who of His tender love to mankind gave up His Son for us all, will He not with Him freely give us the purity and love which we have not, and never shall have, in ourselves?

First Sunday after Easter.

April 11, 1858.

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1 Corinthians xv. 57.

"THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

St. Paul speaks in this chapter as if the resurrection of Christ were *the* victory over the grave. Was it impossible, then, for men, before the resurrection of Christ, to look beyond the grave? Were all the hopes of immortality which sages in the old world cherished, fallacious? Christian apologists have often said, that for men generally the hope did not exist at all; that the Jew was kept from it by Divine purpose; that the few Gentiles who entertained it, appealed to evidence which they must have felt themselves—which, at all events, we know to be,—unsatisfactory. Nothing, they urge, but the reappearance of one who had been laid in the tomb could be an assurance to human beings that it was not to close for ever upon them.

I suspect, my brethren, that special pleaders for

the Gospel generally do more harm to the Gospel than to its opponents. They are sadly tempted to suppress facts and to warp facts, if not to invent facts, and any suppression or warping must injure a true cause, and be offensive to a true God. That we may obtain a plausible defence of a principle, we continually misrepresent and distort the principle itself. The case before us is an example of what I mean. We have dwarfed the New Testament doctrine respecting our Lord's resurrection, through our eagerness to disparage the condition and the expectations of those who lived before it. I think we shall understand much better how truly the victory over the grave is God's gift in Christ, not an inherent right of our nature, if we do justice to that condition and to those expectations.

The Apostles unquestionably speak of our Lord's resurrection as an unprecedented fact in the world's history. But they say that its importance to human beings lay in this, that it declared Jesus to be the Son of God with power. It was an act retrospective and prospective. It revealed the Head of the human race. It revealed the relation of that human race, in the person of its Head, to the Father of All. That which was manifested to be true, when He Who had taken on Him our nature, and had died as we die, rose out of death because He could not possibly be holden of it, had been true always. Those who believed in Christ could not doubt that man was to

learn his condition from Christ, that he could learn it only from Christ. As St. Paul states the question in two converse propositions: "If we do not rise, Christ is not risen;" if Christ is risen, then, "as in Adam all die, all in Christ will be made alive." The evidence for the Resurrection, then, lay in all the history, in all the experiences and life of men, up to that hour. Fishermen and tent-makers could not establish it. If there was such a Person, such a Head of man, such a Son of God, as they said was denoted by this event, God would show that there was, If not, there was no Gospel.

To think then that we are honouring the Resurrection by dishonouring the expectations of immortality which men in the foregone ages had derived from one source or another, is surely monstrous. Supposing they were only the guesses of half-a-dozen earnest and thoughtful men, would these guesses be confounded and not established by the later discovery? Does any scientific man scoff at Galileo or Copernicus, because they had adopted a conclusion which Newton proved? If, for instance, it be true that all the arguments in Plato's 'Phædo' can be answered,—that a clever advocate may find holes in every one of them,—is not the question all the more interesting, why those arguments seemed so weighty to a man who was, to say the least, as acute a dialectician as his critics, as practised in the exposure of false and treacherous reasonings? Why was the existence of a

Memory a sign to him that he did not only belong to the present, but to the past and future? Why did the alternations of light and darkness,—the succession of opposite conditions in human experience,—suggest the thought that what was called Death might be the entrance on another stage of Life? You can show that such evidence did not prove enough, or proved too much; any logician of his day could have done the same. But when you have won all the trophies which are due to the victors in school exercises, I must still ask: "How came these thoughts into this man's mind? Are they not in yours, for all that you can detect their weakness? May they not point to some demonstration, if this is not one? At all events, ought not every one who supposes that such a demonstration has been made, to welcome every effort after it with thankfulness and joy?"

But the assumption with which I started is not a tenable one. It is not true that those who brought forward these arguments for immortality were opposing themselves to the belief of the rest of the world. They were trying to justify a belief which had expressed itself in every mythology, in every legend, against the unbelief which the falsehoods of those mythologies and legends, co-operating with natural appearances,—yes! and with very strong, if not the strongest, motives to the heart of man,—were producing in those about them and in themselves. The death of every flower, of every beast, of every man, was

a broad, palpable argument addressed to the senses, which one might have supposed that no efforts of imagination or speculation could in the least have resisted. But there were other arguments as strong against making the effort. Sickness and pain did not merely bring death home to each person; they did not merely say, "Thou art under the same law with all these creatures about thee;" they took away the disposition to struggle with it; they were perpetual reasons for yielding to the Destroyer. To these were added other reasons stronger still. Was anything to be gained hereafter by not yielding to him? Was it not more terrible to a man, if he could not regard the threescore years and ten as the boundary of his pilgrimage? Might not the dim gulf beyond be infinitely more horrible and trackless than any the worst wilderness which he had traversed here? If he could 'jump the life to come,' would it not be a quite infinite relief from the vagueness of expectation,—from the probability that whatever was worst in his condition here would be aggravated and deepened there?

There were, I say, all these excuses, all these motives, for men to accept the grave as their conqueror, not to dream of any conquest over it. But consider what this submission involved. If a man fairly abandoned the conflict with death, if he admitted its dominion to be absolute, could he merely jump the life to come? Must not he relinquish all effort to preserve the life

that is? Must not the sense of a sword hanging over him which may descend at any moment, which must at some moment cut the thin thread altogether, cause him to regard all efforts of the physician to oppose the progress of disease, as very vain and desperate? Must not he come to consider all contests with the elements for the purpose of making existence more endurable, as strife with a tyrant who would have his way at last? Must not all thought about descendants, all provision for their well-being, appear ridiculous? I am forced to use language which you will at once feel to be improper on this ground, that it supposes a man to be *giving up* effort and foresight upon calculation. Whereas the creature I am supposing is incapable of calculation. It is a part of his calamity, of his barbarism, that he is. He cannot look before and after; in other words, he cannot exercise the attributes of a man. But why can he not? Just because he yields to the appearances which nature presents; just because he has no belief that life is stronger than death, and that there is another law for him than the law which binds natural things. And if no race of men, perhaps no man, has ever sunk quite to this level, though many races and many men have come very near it, this is because there has been in every man and in every race, *some* faith in a victory over the grave.

I have called this a faith. Do I mean that it is what we call a faith in the immortality of the soul?

No, I admit at once that it never presented itself in that abstract notional shape to any people of the old world or of the new, to any nation of Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, Christians. Men believed that their life was sustained by some living Power, by some one mightier than themselves; from whom it had come originally; who had added to it whatever made it tolerable. According to the strength of their belief that they had such a Power or such powers on their side, was the strength of their resolution not to be crushed by the powers of death, in whatever form they appeared. With this help it was possible, it was worth while, to weed and plough the ground; it was possible and worth while to resist the elements, to turn them into ministers; it was possible and worth while to work for generations unborn; it was possible and worth while to live as members of families, as citizens, yes, and to give up life for the sake of the family and the city. No doubt all this was a defiance of nature, was evident mockery of what seemed its most stringent and irreversible edicts. But the man was confident that he could rise above these edicts, that he was meant to rise above them, that he was not a man if he succumbed to them. How it was he could not tell. He could only say, "There is a Being, or there are beings, prompting me, impelling me, not to be a slave, saying that I must fight against everything, be it what it may, which would make me a slave. I am yielding obedience to this higher

government, I am claiming it as my ally, when I am refusing to confess death as my master, when I am framing all my acts on the principle that I am born to live.

But then came in a terrible doubt, to some of the consequences of which I have alluded already: "May I count upon this alliance? Is this higher government which seems to set me upon these enterprises, indeed a friendly one? Has it no jealousy, no suspicion of me? May it not be employing me as its agent, and all the while be grudging any successes which I may win? Has it no *reasonable* complaints against me? May I not have been using the powers which it has entrusted to me unlawfully? May I not have been refusing the homage which I owe it? May it not after all be in conspiracy with the tyrant? May it not be identical with him? When I enter the unseen world, may I not find that every struggle I have been engaged in, every victory I have achieved, is to swell and aggravate my doom?"

Such questions each man, according to his own measure and quality, had to encounter. They presented themselves to the hero who was conscious of having desired to be a god; they presented themselves to the ordinary wayfarer who could not tell that he was not defying the God, when he sought the aid of the physician to keep off a disease. The physician appeared to him almost or quite divine; but was not that which he was driving out also divine? There was

in the great man and in the poor man the sense of an evil which was his own, which deserved punishment, which would some day receive punishment. There was in the great man and in the poor man a perpetual alternation of fear and hope that the highest of all might be the inflicter of the punishment or the deliverer from it. And ultimately that doubt confounded itself with another,—Was he the author of the evil which men did, or the enemy of it?

The priests, in different nations, sustained the belief in deliverers and in punishers. They kept alive the sense of a communion between the visible and the invisible world. They kept alive the sense of wrongs done by the inhabitants of the visible world, which the inhabitants of the invisible world would avenge. As they reduced these thoughts more and more into a system, as they adapted them to different regions of the earth, and to different hopes and terrors in the minds of themselves and their disciples, as they began to sink the divinity in themselves, and half to believe that all divine wrath and divine deliverance was committed to their hands, the worship of that which was evil and destructive became the dominant worship, the worship of that which was good and helpful the accidental and the exceptional. So more and more the thought of immortality grew to be a terrible and a hateful one to men, while yet it lay upon them as an incubus which they could not throw off. One class of philosophers sought to relieve them of it by

appealing to the evidence of nature in favour of the grave being the final conqueror. So far they might have succeeded with any whose consciences were not tormented with the recollection or the presence of guilt. They had another more difficult task to achieve. They had to persuade men that it was well to make the most of life, because it was to terminate so soon. But this phrase, "making the most of life," when it was interpreted by this argument, could not mean what it had meant in the mouths of those who thought that life was to be a great struggle, a continual resistance to the powers of death. Least of all could it mean casting away present enjoyment for the sake of family, friends, country. It must soon, if not at once, translate itself into the formula used in this chapter, "*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*" Therefore those philosophers who could not accept this as the solution of the Sphinx riddle, and yet were sure that the priests and mythologists had not solved it, were compelled to seek for another. They asked whether there were not evidences in the constitution of the world, and in the constitution of man, that man was more than an animal, and that whatever there was in him which was above the animal, was not doomed to the death of the animal. They maintained that that thing in him which thinks, believes, hopes, must belong to life. They were therefore asserting, not a natural immortality for themselves, but an immortality which belonged to

them by rising above nature. They were, as I said, doing their best to vindicate the faith of their countrymen in a living Being, a source of life, and to separate this faith from the unbelief which turned that Being into an author of death. They did not, they could not, stop there. They felt that the Author of Life must be the author of all that was good in life, that He must be a Righteous Being. They did not, therefore, for an instant deny the doctrine of the mythologist, that He must punish wrong. They asserted it vehemently. But they asserted also that this punishment must be good, as He Who inflicts it is good. It could proceed from no lust of vengeance. It must be the assertion of eternal right against the wrong, the triumph of right over wrong.

There was, I think, a manifest weakness and deficiency in these thoughts and hopes. *Something* in man was found not to be animal: that something was to survive. Yes! and that something could be nothing else than himself. But was all that he had in common with the animals to perish? Was this body, so curiously and wonderfully fashioned, to be cast away as a poor, useless thing, when it had hardly acquired the use of any of its powers? So it appeared. The soul, it was said, alone can survive the grave. And whose soul? The soul of some wise man, who has been able to raise himself above the conditions by which ordinary men are vanquished? Again this seemed to be so. And yet it could not

be so, if the evidence was derived from a fair examination of the difference between man as man and other creatures. Once more; the evil man hereafter would meet his punishment, the good his reward. Be it so. Was there, then, to be a nice arithmetic, determining whether this man had done a majority of good deeds or of evil? Was the reward or the punishment to be settled according to that calculation? The philosopher would have revolted at such a theory. It was like the vulgar sacerdotal huckstering which he wished to escape. It entirely interfered with his idea of a morality which consists in principles, not in acts, in the acknowledgment of a Right that is perfect and absolute. But how could the contradiction be avoided? Could there be any judgment of ordinary human beings which was one of inward principles, not chiefly or merely of outward acts?

Still I must ask, as I asked before, "Whence came such thoughts as these to any human beings, let there have been ever so many flaws in them? How was it that the legends of the Greek people breathed of immortality? How was it that sages who had felt the contradictions and the burden of these legends, held fast to the same expectation?" I find the answer in the Old Testament. There the God Who cannot be seen, Who has made man in His image, is set forth as the Teacher of a race which is represented as dull, animal, idolatrous. With every propensity to worship dead things, to become the mere

tool and slave of nature, the Jew is made conscious of a calling to know a living God and to be His servant. Trusting in the God Who has called him, claiming to be His subject, the poor earthworm is capable of domestic life, of civic life; he can submit to laws; he can conquer giants; he can look forward to a distant future; he can anticipate a time when through his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. But the Scriptures show us another side to the picture. The Jew follows his taste and nature; he wishes to be like the people about him; he confounds God with that which he sees; he fancies God is like him in his dark, foul, cruel tendencies. His priests abet these delusions, are the great propagators and authors of them, hate every witness that God is indeed a Righteous God and a Deliverer. Then Prophets are sent to show him how he has sunk into a crawling insect again; how he has lost his position on earth in losing his faith in the God of Heaven; how impossible it is for him to be a faithful brother, husband, father, judge, soldier; how inevitably he has sold himself to oppressors. These Prophets show him how all punishments are sent him as calls to repentance; how each one of them is a voice from God, bidding the whole nation, bidding each man in it, forsake the lying gods that darken and debase those who trust in them, and return to the true God, the Deliverer.

If I believe these records, I believe that men would

certainly sink under the dominion of death, and own death to be omnipotent, if God did not teach them the opposite lesson,—if He did not make them confess that life is mightier than death, and that they act, think, speak, because it is. I believe therefore that God, and God only, has imparted these same discoveries, in whatever degree they have been received, to the heart of every nation and of every man. I believe that all confusions which have mingled with these discoveries and have contradicted them, have, as the Scripture affirms and as profane history shows, proceeded from the unbelief of men in this Divine and continual teaching; from their determination to worship the creature instead of the Creator, dead things instead of Him Who liveth for ever, an Enemy of man instead of a Deliverer. I believe that this is the sin of Jew and Gentile, the sin of the world, the sin which has brought death into the world; that it is with this sin and death that the God of Life and Righteousness has been always fighting; that it is from this He has been always seeking to redeem our race. And therefore our Lord's life on earth, as it is presented to us in the simple Gospel narratives, appears to me the most wonderful climax of this education. Throughout it is the history of a battle with the power of death, whether it is exerted over the body or the spirit of man. Throughout it is the history of a victory over the power of death, won not in His own name, but in the name of His Father.

With calmness and majesty He simply bids sickness and disease, the inchoate forms of death, depart. He sets men free from death itself, treating it as an intruder into the Divine order. And then as calmly He accepts death. He claims no exemption from it on the ground of holiness, purity, sonship to God. He leaves the care of these to His Father. He is one with us. Death shall have all that it can have. Its utmost power shall be proved on Him. He pretends to no immortality apart from God. He has no trust in Nature. He trusts in His Father. And His Father owns the trust. He raises Him from the dead, not because He has severed Himself from men, but because He has made Himself one with them. His goodness in His Father's eyes is not that He stands aloof from the sinners of the earth, but that He has borne their sins. He rises from the dead, not as a spirit, without flesh and bones, but with the body which was laid in the tomb. God has given the Man an entire victory over death, and him that had the power of death.

And so St. Paul's words in the text interpret themselves to the Jews and Greeks in the Church of Corinth. He knows why death has had a sting for both, why the grave has claimed victory over both. A voice had spoken in the conscience of each Jew and Greek, "Thou hast sinned." A Law, denouncing righteous judgment against transgression, had confirmed and deepened that voice. Death might bring

the sinner face to face with the Judge from Whom this sentence had gone forth. Death must be dreadful, if to meet this Righteous Judge is terrible. St. Paul declares that the Righteous Judge has met His creature, has made peace with him, has shown that to be separate from Him is miserable, to be with Him blessedness. God, he says, Himself, coming to us in His dying Son, has taken away the sting of death for you, for me, for all. God Himself, raising His Son from the dead, has given a victory over the grave to you, to me, to all. The Jew had been taught that God's will must be done, and that man must yield to it; the Greek had been shown that man has a will, and that it must shake off all fetters which impede its freedom. Jesus Christ dying to do His Father's will, Jesus Christ rising because that will was accomplished in the emancipation of man from the chains which had bound him, enabled a Hebrew of the Hebrews to say to the inhabitants of the isthmus in which the Lords of the earth had sought by deeds of valour and prowess to exalt themselves into gods, "Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory!" From Him comes the triumph of that life which you thought He was crushing. It is not a triumph for a moment, but for ever. That which opposed itself as a hopeless barrier to the hero, has proved weak before the crucified Man.

But though these words of the Apostle illuminate the darkest passages of general history, penetrate into

the cells and caverns where lonely thinkers had toiled and suffered in the old world, it is not for the sake of the past that I would use them chiefly today. They were written, indeed, for the consolation of those who were looking upon the tombs of their forefathers, and contemplating their unfinished works, their seemingly abortive struggles. But they were written still more for the times that were coming; they belong to us; we have need to ponder each one of them.

I. It is GOD Who giveth us the victory. We are in as much danger of fancying that He is not the God of Life, but of Death, that He is not fighting with us, but against us, that He is bent upon our destruction, as the Jews or Greeks were. The history of Christendom has proved that every dark conception of Him which prevailed among Pagans, may clothe itself in the forms and vestures of the New Dispensation, may justify itself by venerable traditions, may appeal—as the devil did in our Lord's Temptation—to the language of Scripture. Our own consciences tell us that it is so; they tell us why it is so. We know that we are as prone to be sensual and idolatrous as our forefathers who worshiped stocks and stones were, though our sensuality and idolatry may choose different forms from theirs. We know that we are as prone to be malicious and hateful as they were. We know that when we have become earthly and sensual, we think of God as earthly and sensual; that when

we have become malicious and hateful, we think of God as hateful and malicious. And then we must persuade Him, as earthly and sensual creatures are persuaded,—as evil spirits are persuaded,—not to wreak His spite and rage upon us. Now, as of old, there will be religious teachers to foster these diseases of the natural heart, to treat the jaundiced likeness of God as a true likeness, to block up the passage to Him. And since such diseases and such corruptions lead to baseness, cowardice, heartlessness,—since they are the direct road to death and perdition for nations and men,—it is most needful that the old Gospel should be sounded in our ears—"God giveth us the victory. God is seen in Christ, and only in Him. God is now what He was when He raised His Son from the dead. You may arise and go to Him as your father. That is the only repentance for any sinful creature; that is the only way of casting away the slough of old habits, and rising up a new and right and renovated man."

II. And next, it is most needful to recollect that the victory is a *gift*. I do not mean merely that the final victory over the grave is a gift. That too we may often forget. We may believe that we shall achieve our immortal happiness by some splendid exertions or faith of ours. We may think that it is to be won by a strife with the Divine Will, not by trust in it and submission to it. And we shall easily fall into this mistake if we do not look upon every preparatory victory

of life over death as a gift of God. Each morning that we wake out of sleep, each power that we are able to exert over brute matter, each energy of the body, each return of health after sickness, each hard discovery, each power which the will exerts over the inclinations of our own flesh, each act of just government over other men, each influence we are able to put forth for making other men more wise or more free,—of this we must say "God giveth it;" this we must accept as the fruit and manifestation of His Will, as the pledge and foretaste of a final victory. Believe it to be so, young man, rejoicing in the days of thy youth, in the fulness and freshness of life; believe it to be so, weary pilgrim, struggling under the load of daily and increasing pain; God in each case is testifying, if thou wilt understand the testimony, that life in thee is stronger than death, that life in thee shall overcome death. Therefore give up thy life to Him, that He may use it as He knows best. Let Him have thy vigour, to turn it against the foes of thy country and of men. Let Him have thy feebleness, that His Fatherly love and sympathy, and the obedience that He wrought out in Christ by suffering, may shine forth in thee. Be sure that He has most various methods of manifesting the power of His Son's Resurrection here; but that, if thou trustest in Him, and dost not faint, the end will be the same; all shall share alike in the victory.

III. And think that it is God Who giveth *us* the

victory. Not some great and rare people, born with some special aptitude for good, with some special exemption from motions and inclinations to ill; but us who have fallen into ten thousand errors, us who are conscious of evils which we dare not speak of to a neighbour, us who are tempted continually to let the current carry us where it will, to make utter shipwreck. To retrieve ourselves we find impossible; circumstances, example, the pressure of the age, habits that have become part of us, forbid us to rise. But the Creator of heaven and earth commands us to rise. The hosts against us may be overwhelming; He is on our side.

IV. Still it is a *victory*. Immortality, as I have urged throughout this sermon, is not natural, if by natural is meant that which would befall us supposing we were not voluntary spiritual beings. It belongs to us only as voluntary spiritual beings. If we surrender that condition, we surrender our immortality, we take up our position as mortal. But we cannot surrender it; we feel and know that we cannot, even when we are trying most to do it, even when we are stooping to the deepest ignominy. And therefore let us not for a moment cease to connect Resurrection with faith, with hope; therefore with conflict. We cannot, if we connect Christ's Resurrection with ours, if we judge of ours by His. He set his face as a flint. His garments were the garments of one who trode the winefat. It was an agony, though it was the agony of

submission. His sweat was as great drops of blood, though the issue was, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done." Therefore God gave Him the victory, the perfect victory of spirit and soul and body.

V. This solemn warning against the sloth which so easily besets us, this encouragement to believe that God's Spirit is ever striving to shake it off, is suggested by the last words of the text, "*Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" But we need these words also for ther warnings and other encouragements. We need em to take away the conceit that the battle—though must be fought by each one of us, though it must on by each one of us—is a battle for some sepa- r selfish prize. Christ, the Head of our race, tered into the holiest place, having obtained Redemption for us. That holiest place is the f His Father; that eternal Redemption is ondage to our own selfish natures and to selfishness, which made it impossible for lowship with God or fellowship with our ve think that we, by some work or some an enter into the presence of God, we rough Jesus Christ our Lord; if we e some redemption or some victory ich does not belong to our whole ceive that Redemption and that s Christ our Lord. He is the d; He has won the Victory by all. It is another redemption,

another victory than His that we seek, if we would divide ourselves from any.

VI. This text then, brethren, is nothing else but the translation into words of the Easter Eucharist. "*Thanks be to God,*" the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper says, "*Who give thus the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" You came last Sunday to celebrate an accomplished act, a victory won. You came to give thanks that God had raised His Son, and so had raised our race, from death to life. You came to say that you, being a portion of this race, needed that li day by day, because you had a conflict day by d with the powers of death. You came to say that knew you could only receive that life from God. came to seek it through the flesh and blood of Christ our Lord. You came to confess tha members of His Body, only by the powe Holy Spirit, did you hope for victory ov feeblest of your enemies; that as mem body, by the power of His Spirit, you b last enemy, that all enemies will be p feet, and therefore under yours.

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